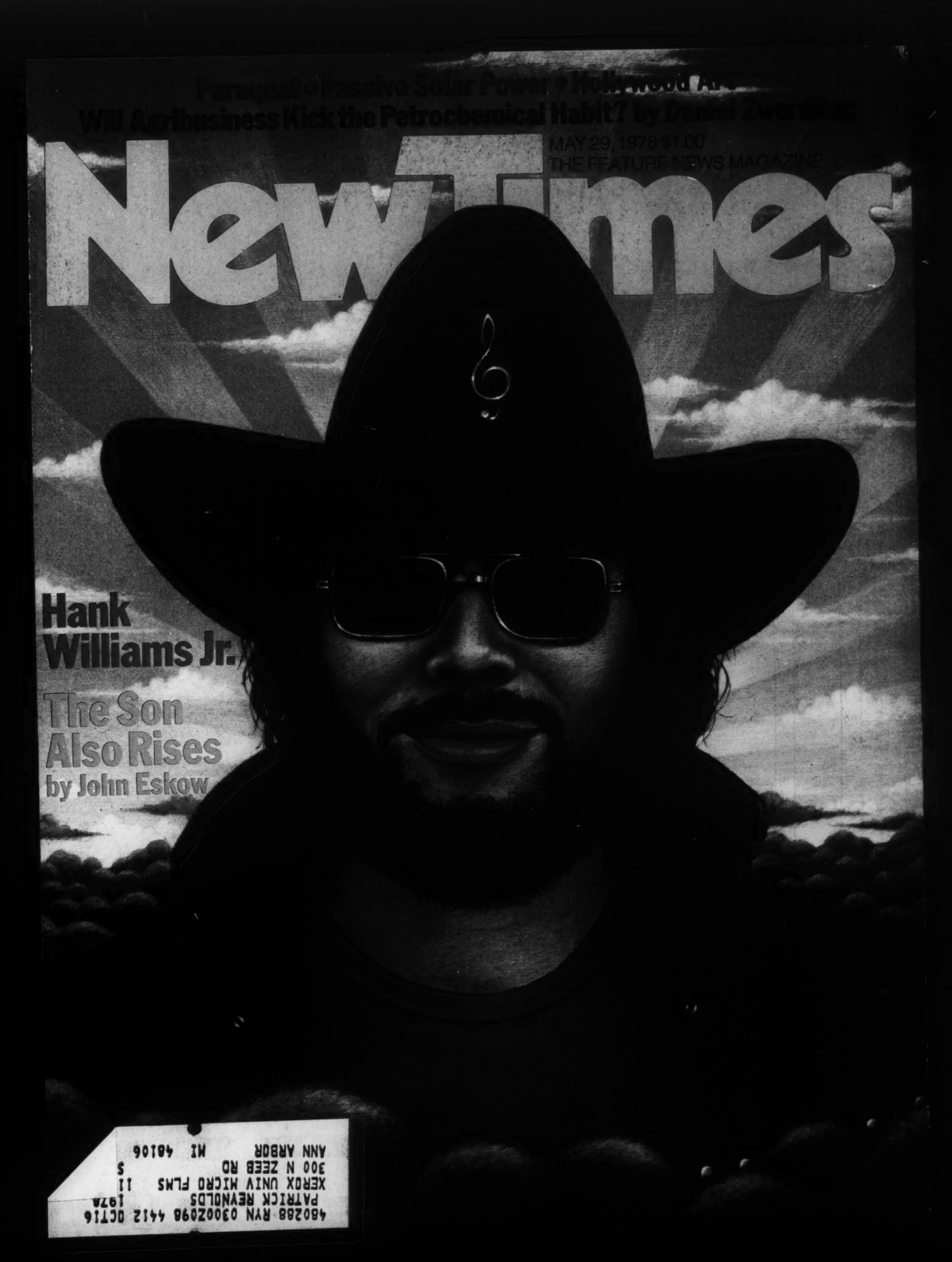
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Will Agribusiness Kick the Petrochemical Habit? by Daniel Zwerdling
MAY 29, 1978 $1.00
THE FEATURE NEWS MAGAZINE
New Times
Hank Williams Jr.
The Son Also Rises
by John Eskow

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Last year, Technics gave you everything you wanted in direct drive. This year we're giving you less.

Introducing three new Technics turntables: The SL-1600 automatic, the SL-1700 semi-automatic and the SL-1800 manual. All with the Technics direct-drive system. The system FM stations use and discos abuse. And all with performance specs even better than last year's.

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This year we did more to give you less acoustic feedback. With Technics double-isolated suspension system. A floating system that not only damps out external vibrations at the base but also from the platter and tonearm. Combined with our new sensitive gimbal-suspension tonearm, it dramatically reduces feedback. Even at high music levels.

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Amplified, even the smallest fluctuations in platter speed can be your biggest problem. So this year with a B-FG speed stabilizer built into our 321-element one-chip IC, you get infinitesimal wow and flutter, equal to Technics professional level. An incredible 0.025% WRMS.

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Technics. We're giving you less. And that means you're getting more.

Technics
by Panasonic

It's hard to find a $1,000 tape deck that doesn't use Maxell. Or a $100 tape deck that shouldn't.

If you spent $1000 on a tape deck, you'd be concerned with hearing every bit of sound it could produce.

That's why owners of the world's best tape decks use Maxell more than any other brand.

But if you're like most people, you don't own the best tape deck in the world and you're probably not using Maxell. And chances are, you're not hearing every bit of sound your tape deck is capable of producing.

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Surprising facts every rum drinker should know.

Ah, what rum drinkers don't know about rum. So Myers's thinks it's time to raise some eyebrows.

The first fact of rum. Rum comes in three shades: white, gold, and dark. Some light rums are blended to have a barely noticeable taste. Their flavor might fade in the drink. But Myers's is blended specially to be more flavorful. The Myers's comes through the mixer.

Another surprise. Dark rum isn't any stronger than light rum. Both are the same alcoholic proof. So Myers's isn't any stronger, even though it has a tastier rum flavor.

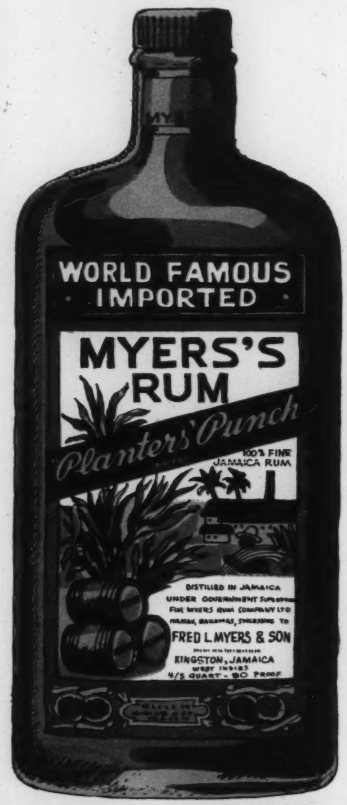
More revelations. Myers's is more expensive. It's imported from Jamaica where it's

made slowly, in small batches. The richer taste is worth the time. And the price.

Still another little known fact. Caribbean bartenders mix Myers's into exotic drinks made with lighter rums. They trust Myers's to enhance the flavor. So discover for yourself the dash that Myers's adds to a simple Rum & Cola. The

extra punch Myers's adds to a Planters' Punch. Here are the recipes for your pleasure.

Myers's Planters' Punch: Combine in shaker, 3 oz. orange juice, juice of ½ lemon or lime, 1½ oz. Myers's. Add 1 tsp. superfine sugar and dash of grenadine. Shake well and serve in tall glass filled



with ice. Add orange slice, cherry.

Myers's Rum and Cola: Into a highball glass, add 1½ oz. Myers's Rum. Fill glass with cola beverage. Add slice of lemon or lime, and stir.

And finally, one last point. Dark rum is better to use in cooking than light rum. Myers's adds a fuller rum flavor to foods. Try sprinkling Myers's over grapefruit halves. It's a simple way

to create an interesting first course. Myers's makes so many rum recipes even more delicious.

So now that you know the facts, your choice should be clear: Myers's Rum.

Because if you like rum, it's time you discovered the pleasures that wait for you in the dark.

Next to Myers's All other Rums Seem Pale.

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NewTimes

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 11

MAY 29, 1978

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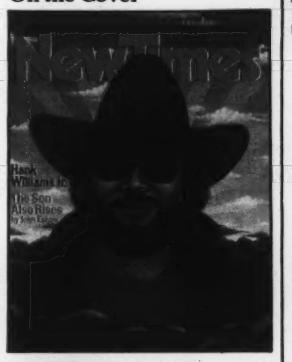

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When Hank Williams Jr. was eight years old, he inherited his father's career. "You're nothin' but a ghost of your daddy," he was told, and the country music industry conspired to keep it that way through his teens. But after an extended bout with alcoholism, an attempted suicide, and a mountain-climbing accident which literally split his head open, Hank Jr. is finally living his own life—and enjoying it. "Let somebody else sing the blues," he says. "I've put in my time."
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American farmers have been feeding their crops—not to mention American consumers—a steady dose of petrochemicals since World War II. The Department of Agriculture backs up the farmers' claim that there is no other way. If so, then how have so many farmers been so successful going . . . er . . . cold turkey?
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Energy/by Wade Greene

SOLAR REFRACTIONS

When Jimmy Carter paid presidential homage to Sun Day early this month on a thoroughly sunless, rain-drenched mesa west of Denver, he did so amidst a wonderful, telegenic array of devices designed to harness the sun's energy. Scattered around him were an odorous solar-panel-heated tank that turned manure into burnable gas; a sun-tracking parabolic mirror whose concentrated reflections could boil water into steam to drive a turbine to turn an electric generator; two varieties of windmill; and panels of photovoltaic cells that had been rigged up to power the amplification system—the one over which Carter declared: "The question is no longer whether solar energy works. We know it works."

True enough. Several recent studies find that known solar energy technologies can, within decades, provide most of humanity's power needs. The Federal Council on Environmental Quality recently foresaw a full quarter of this energy-hungry nation's power consumption being so met as early as the year 2000. But if the sun's day is truly at hand as an exploitable energy source, the most workable technology for harnessing this source was represented on the Colorado mesa by none of the elegant props near the President's podium, but by a modest outhouse-sized structure off to the side. This was a model of a bus stop shelter used around Aspen, in which the main solar ingredients were a glass wall and a half dozen blackened steel drums full of water that sat behind the wall. And if there is a 1978 benchmark in terms of advancing solar power, the celebration of the bus stops solar system recently in Philadelphia may qualify even better than Sun Day's nationwide demonstrations.

Some 1,300 architects, engineers and laymen showed up for the narrower occasion, the Second National Passive Solar Conference held at the University of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Energy was so impressed by the turnout that the acting assistant secretary for solar applications appeared unexpectedly and bumped a lower-echelon colleague from a lunch speaker's slot. The purpose of the gathering was to explore the advantages of using the sun's energy passively rather than actively—to explore and, for many, to ratify. "Passive solar is out of the bag," said the opening speaker, Douglas Kelbaugh, a young Princeton, New Jersey, architect. "There's no doubt about it."

Passive solar is solar power reduced to its most rudimentary, least expensive form. It's to active solar what the skateboard is to a Mercedes Benz. In the words of Donald Watson, architect and author of *Designing and Building a Solar Home*, "A passive system has only one moving part, the earth moving around the sun."

Pre-Columbian Indians in the American Southwest long ago employed basic passive solar techniques to heat their cliff dwellings. The dwellings were oriented so that they faced south, thus capturing the winter sun, which in the Northern Hemisphere arches low across the southern sky. Some of the sun's heat entered the structures, some was absorbed by the thick adobe walls and radiated warmth long after the sun had set. "The only thing the Indians lacked," explains John Yellott of Arizona State University, who has been designing and analyzing solar technology for two decades, "was glass."

With glass came the ability to let sunlight in while keeping its heat from flowing readily back out. They didn't use the term passive—no one seems to have until a couple of years ago—but early American homebuilders obviously appreciated basic principles of passive solar heating. Many existing eighteenth century houses have a predominance of windows on their south sides and few, if any, on the north. Because it was always in the shadow of the winter sun, a north wall served solar heating purposes better by being windowless and thus minimizing the outflow of the sun's heat.

As a glance at nearly any modern community attests, the sun-exploiting techniques of both early Indians and New Englanders virtually collapsed in recent decades before the assaults of cheap oil, gas and electricity. Builders began ignoring the natural elements and simply relied on high-power furnaces to do the sun's work.

The rediscovery of passive solar heating is usually traced back to Southern France and the Trombe-Michel Wall, named after French professor Felix Trombe and architect Jacques Michel, and increasingly referred to as simply the trombe wall, with a small *t*. Incorporated in several buildings in the French Pyrenees that have been built since the early 1960s, a trombe wall is simply a large, dark, south-facing concrete wall, with openings at the top and bottom and a sheet of glass set a few inches from the face of the concrete. Heat builds up in the space because of the greenhouse effect. The hot air rises and enters interior living areas behind the wall through the upper openings; and to replace it, cooler air is sucked into the space through the lower openings. The building's air is thereby heated and circulated, without moving parts. Moreover, when the sun isn't shining, the wall itself warms the interior with the heat its concrete has absorbed during sunny hours.

Countless variations on the trombe wall have since been erected by pioneers of passive solar energy—and today there are nearly as many different designs as there are houses (possibly 1,000, with the number doubling every six months, according to William A. Shurcliff, the main chronicler of solar buildings throughout North America). But in the growing lexicon of solar passivity, three categories now cover most designs: "direct gain" (letting the sun shine in through extensive southern windows and designing concrete floors and other structural elements to absorb and store the sun's heat); "indirect gain" (à la the trombe wall, in which sunshine is converted to

Author, solar system and house

PHOTOGRAPHS BY IRA WYMAN

Wade Greene is currently on an Alicia Patterson Foundation fellowship, studying Appropriate Technology.

heat outside of actual living space); and "isolated gain" (in which the sun's heat is not only collected but kept in an area, say a rock-filled compartment, that is set completely apart from living spaces, and is tapped at will).

Within these categories, a number of ingenious sub-techniques are being used or tested to deal with passive solar's main challenge—keeping the sun's heat once you've got it. A *Popular Mechanics* dreamland of movable-insulation devices now exists in various stages of perfection, all designed to cope with the fact that while lots of southern windows or other forms of glazing are needed to let the sunshine in, during cold sunless hours glass is notoriously poor at holding heat.

How effective are modern passive solar systems? I can attest personally to the fact that they are surprisingly effective as well as being remarkably easy to install. My wife and I recently built a trombe wall system into our new house on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, and find that between it and a wood-burning parlor stove, we have sufficient heat to survive the worst winters.

We faced our moment of truth, and then some, in early 1977, soon after we finished our house. Temperature records were being broken throughout the Northeast. Outdoors, the thermometer hovered for days at around 10 degrees, which is extraordinarily cold for Nantucket. And indoors? When the sun was shining, the temperature was in the low to mid-60s—from sunshine alone. At night we stoked up our wood-burning stove for a while after dinner, but let it die out soon after retiring, and found that the house got no colder than the low 50s at night.

Other more refined passive systems do even better. Take, for instance, the careful arithmetic of Douglas Balcomb's greenhouse-based system. A nuclear engineer for much of his career, Balcomb is the solar program manager of the government's Los Alamos scientific laboratories in New Mexico, and he owns a passively heated (and cooled) 1,950-square-foot home in Sante Fe. He has standby baseboard electric heating, thermostat-controlled to go on when the temperature drops below 65. Balcomb says that over a one-year period from February 1977 to February 1978, in which winter temperatures routinely dropped to 10 degrees or lower, his electric heat bill came to $38 (and he used less than half a cord of wood in his fireplace as well).

Capital costs of passive solar systems are hard to put a figure on in many cases, because passive solar design is integrated in, and difficult to separate from, a building's overall costs. But Bruce Anderson, executive editor of *Solar Age*, who is co-authoring a book with Balcomb for the Department of Energy on designing these systems, figures that passive solar collecting in a glass-faced trombe wall, for instance, generally runs between $8 and $10 per square foot, compared to $30 to $40 for an equivalent factory-made active collector.

All told, advocates of passive solar energy claim that their way of using the sun is cheaper, simpler and more trouble-free than other heating systems, including active solar systems, and they are increasingly able to document such claims. Many feel social, even ideological superiorities for their methods as well, and a cult of sorts has built up around these less easily documented convictions. While the public at large may look at solar energy advocacy as a monolithic movement, a sometimes acrimonious divide has opened up between passive and active disciples, comparable to the division between orthodox and reformed schisms in many religions, though it is not clear in the solar theology just which side qualifies as orthodox and which reformed.

"If taken to extreme," says Bill Yanda, who with his wife, Susan, goes about the country organizing groups to set up heat-producing greenhouses, "one sees the active system as a series of gadgets and devices that one plugs into the house, and nothing changes. You just set the thermostat. At the passive extreme, you begin to think of the home as a bioshelter, as an organism, really, that is performing a whole bunch of functions for you."

Balcomb draws the extremes even more widely. "We've become so gadget oriented that some people seem to think the way to heat a house is to put up some 20 Saturn V rockets a day, build a satellite, convert sunlight to electricity, convert that to microwave, beam it to earth, convert it back to electricity, send it over transmission lines to the house, install a heat pump to reclaim some of the heat lost previously and distribute the heat around the house. What an incredibly inappropriate way to do a job that could be done directly by the sun falling on the house without any mechanical equipment or outside energy."

Balcomb makes his point in technical terms, but to many the difference readily translates into social, economic and even political terms—and wariness. Solar passivists tend to see active solar technologies as fitting too conveniently into established large-scale production and distribution concentrations, whether it's a satellite system that feeds its final product, electricity, through a power company's grid, or a rooftop collector that is mass-produced by, say, Grumman.

Malcolm Lillywhite, a thermal physicist who once worked for the space program and now runs an organization called the Domestic Technology Institute, near Denver, Colorado, feels that one of the appeals of passive solar is that it sidesteps many concentrations of economic and technological control, as epitomized by electric power companies and their networks. "Utilities would like to own the solar system as an extension of the utility," Lillywhite says. "They would like to have centralized solar generators and would like to lease collectors. But when you get to passive, you find it almost defies centralization."

Even the material used in passive solar systems—glass, concrete and simple containers for water—lends itself to local, decentralized production and construction. Not so for most of the

The only moving part is the earth turning around the sun

existing active solar paraphernalia. Travis Price, a highly political advocate of solar energy (he was instrumental in setting up one of the few inner-city solar heating installations, on Manhattan's Lower East Side), claims that "about 80 percent of solar equipment manufacturing right now is owned and controlled by multinationals. Mobil, GE, DuPont, for example. Small people are dying like flies while the big people are underwriting the costs and cutting out the competition. They're doing to solar what they did to small gas stations. It's already happening. They're very upfront about it . . ."

Predictably, producers of active solar equipment are hardly inclined to see all the angels, or even the economists, on the side of passive solar energy. Joe Dawson, a spokesman for Grumman's solar subsidiary, says, "There are two major limitations on passive systems. One, there are severe architectural restraints. You have to use Mother Nature, and that means you're very restricted in your design. The second limitation in some systems is convenience. You know, you have to trade some of your labor for a low-cost system. It's a simple shopping choice."

Even sympathetic experts point out that passive systems often have temperature fluctuations that may be too wide for many Americans brought up on thermostats. "For those people who are accustomed to living at 71.3 degrees year round, passive systems can require some getting used to," says Carl Stein, a New York architect whose firm has long been concerned with energy conservation techniques.

Still, with active solar heating systems often costing up to five figures, and with conventional heating bills easily running up to several hundred dollars a month, it's highly likely that some sacrifices of convenience and constancy will increasingly be made in favor of the economy of passive heating. Indeed, builders Wayne and Susan Nichols predict that up to 40 percent of all homes will be built with passive solar heating five years from now.

If passive inroads reach anywhere near this proportion, such a development could, in the words of Malcolm Lillywhite, mean changing "lots of things besides utility bills and architectural design." For passive solar represents the non-machine—to many of its enthusiasts, even the anti-machine—and as such its emergence, or re-emergence, can be seen as a turning of technology's mechanical tides. But even if passive solar's impact is limited to utility bills and architectural design, that would be no mean development in itself. "A few years ago," says Lillywhite "nobody even knew what we were talking about." ●

ADDENDUM & ERRATUM

Racist, or Just Stupid? Last October 28 we ran a cover story about gang warfare in San Francisco's Chinatown. The cover featured a photo of Marlon Brando in *The Godfather*, above which appeared the headline "Who Is The Chinese Godfather?" Brando's eyes had been altered to give him oriental features, and we added a Fu Manchu as well.

Was our cover racist? Yes, said the Media Alliance, a San Francisco organization of journalists, photographers, filmmakers and publicists. The Alliance complained to the National News Council, criticizing the cover and five other aspects of the story's presentation:

- A contents-page photo of an oriental man apparently smoking an opium pipe ("Not only is this a stereotyped image," the Alliance wrote, "but it does not relate to the story");
- Two illustrations of characters in the story, illustrations that "rely on stereotyped features and are particularly sinister";
- A photograph of a man lying dead on a sidewalk in what the caption calls an old tong war — "but the photograph is not taken from San Francisco's Chinatown nor does it offer clues that it was taken in any Chinatown in this country";
- The use of the word "oriental," which has "a connotation similar to 'colored person' ";
- And the headline "Clazy Joey," used as the title for an accompanying profile of gang leader Joe Fong ("Simply racist," said the Alliance).

The National News Council has no power to penalize news organizations; it investigates complaints and publishes periodic reports in *The Columbia Journalism Review*. The Council asked us to respond to the Alliance's charges.

We replied that the Brando cover was "poor" but not racist ("Have we all gotten to the point where we would like to believe that nationalities have *no* characteristic features?"); that the opium pipe photo was stupid but not a slur; that the illustrations of the two people mentioned in the story were badly done "but not malignant"; that it was news to us that the word "oriental" was demeaning ("There is an area of the world called the Orient"). As for "Clazy Joey," we had to agree that the headline was "absolutely inexcusable. Not just stupid, but racist. Here the Alliance has an all too valid point." We thanked the Council for—deservedly—"rubbing our noses in this."

Mistaken Identity. The president of Mexico is named Jose Lopez Portillo. Maybe you knew this, but we didn't, and in a recent item we called the man something completely different.

Bewitching Stinky. Berkeley police, baffled by the "Stinky" case ("The Berkeley Rapist," *NT*, May 15), have received help from an unlikely source. At midnight on May 5, about 30 local witches gathered in various locations around Berkeley and, pooling their energy, cast a spell over the rapist. "Naturally, we're willing to accept help from almost any source," said Lt. Donald Smithson of the Berkeley Police Department, when told of the witches' activities. But the hex-in was apparently a flop: Stinky is still at large, as he has been for nearly five years.

You Won't Have Diamond Don to Kick Around Anymore. In the May 1 Insider we told you about Diamond Don Gilman, the Marion County, Indiana, sheriff who created a stir when he suddenly suspended 900 special deputies (leaving eight suburban police agencies without the power to make arrests or carry guns). Now, Diamond Don is at it again. Defeated in Indiana's May primary, Gilman vowed to spend the rest of his term "getting even." When the man who beat Gilman, deputy Jim Wells, suggested that Gilman had hurt the department by "playing games" and should resign, Gilman demoted two of Wells' friends. Gilman also promised to "taunt the hell out of the press" in the waning days of his administration. (He told one reporter: "I will taunt you. I will taunt the press for fun.") The day after the election Gilman cut his public information officer's salary by $4,000 and sent him back to the civilian division, saying, "I don't need no PR."

It's a Mall World. It shouldn't be surprising, given the success of shopping malls ("The Malling of America," *NT*, May 1), that Richmar, Inc. of Youngstown, Ohio, would trot out a Monopoly-like amusement and call it "The Mall Game." It will be available this fall in many parts of the country—for a mall-sized $12.

The game seems fairly realistic. Among the cards that players can draw as they move about the board trying to buy merchandise is one that reads, "You've been caught shoplifting—lose two turns," and another that says, "You've tripped on melted ice cream—collect $200 damages." Of course, there doesn't appear to be a real-life correlative for the card that reads, "Your credit has been paid in full by the Merchants' Association." ●

Model ICF-7800W Portable FM/AM/PSB Radio. © 1976 Sony Corporation of America. SONY is a trademark of Sony Corporation.

No way. Never before was just turning on a radio so much fun. This one puts on quite a show. With three bands (FM/AM/PSB), there's plenty here to keep you entertained.

To give you the kind of sound you thought you could only get at home, we gave it a big 3" speaker. Plus two antennas: one for AM, one for FM/PSB. A button to press that filters out static on PSB and gives clear FM reception. And separate bass and treble controls.

To let you go to sleep to music, we built in a sleep-timer. And to let you know when it's time to get up, we put in a wake-up timer.

And if you're lost in the dark and can't see your way, at least you'll be able to see our radio: by the light of its tuning light.

In order to give you all this, we made it in two pieces that fold like a book. With the speaker, the timer and the night light on one side. And the controls on the other. When you close it, the radio automatically shuts off. And it weighs only 1¾ lbs.

Because it closes to protect itself, it's made to be knocked around. And it can stay out with you in any weather.

It took our engineers working real hard to give you this high precision radio. So whether you're roughing it or taking it easy, it will keep you company, entertained and in touch. And if you get bored, it'll give you something to do with your hands.

YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF IT.

"IT'S A SONY."

LETTERS

More about *The Last Cowboy*

Geoffrey Wolff has reviewed my book, *The Last Cowboy*, in some detail ("Books," March 20). It seems a shame that he did not read it more carefully.

Wolff says: "In the absence of any contrary notice it is to be assumed that Henry Blanton and his wife, Betsy, are the authentic names of the couple portrayed here," and he goes on to say that the Blantons have obviously "paid a heavy price to be turned to instructional, exemplary use." He accuses me of "cool and unblinking" cruelty. Indeed, he hangs his review of *The Last Cowboy* on rhetorical questions about whether any book of non-fiction is worth the pain it can cause an undisguised subject.

Anyone who has read past the first few pages of *The Last Cowboy* should know that "Henry Blanton" is a pseudonym, because I said so very clearly in the first sentence of the second paragraph of Chapter 1. No reviewer except Mr. Wolff has missed or overlooked or ignored that statement. Let me add that the identity of every character in my book has been thoroughly disguised, not only by name changes but by innumerable other means.

Let me add, too, that "Henry Blanton" and his wife were willing and gracious subjects; that I lived with them for a long time and filed notebooks as they talked to me, openly and with conviction, about their dreams and the failure of those dreams; that they very much wanted to see this book written; and that in fact the only thing about *The Last Cowboy* that distressed them was my insistence that no one reading the book would be able to recognize them.

Jane Kramer
New York City

Geoffrey Wolff replies:

During the first five-and-one-half pages of her book, Jane Kramer refers fifteen times, without the use of italics or quotation marks, to Henry Blanton or to Henry. Following expressions of thanks to ten real people who helped her with *The Last Cowboy*, she offers her gratitude "most of all to Betsy and Henry Blanton." These many uses of Henry Blanton's name are followed by the sentence in the second paragraph of Chapter I, which Kramer believes says "clearly" that "Henry Blanton" is a "pseudonym." Here is that sentence, the only mention in *The Last Cowboy* that any name, place, circumstance or event may have been in any way fictionalized: "'Expressin' right' was important to the man I call Henry Blanton."

Kramer writes that I have accused her of "'cool and unblinking' cruelty." Here are my published words: "Kramer's gorgeous control, so cool and unblinking, provokes a disclaimer. People do not live their lives, or suffer them, to become terms in a syllogistic parable, however elegant its proofs." I hope that in her confusion of "gorgeous control" with "cruelty" she did not also pervert the meaning of other locutions I used to describe her work: "tact" and "generosity" and "precision." But I am not hopeful: Her disclosure by mail—denied to readers of her book—that "no one reading the book would be able to recognize" the "Blantons" reveals an even greater confusion of forms and purposes. The story is true, or it is not. The distinction has consequence: *The Last Cowboy* pretends to authenticity, and profits from its assurance that this is how a particular American lives in a particular place at this particular time.

If *The Last Cowboy* is a novelette, it would have been more candid of Kramer to have said as much. As fiction it is not a patch on the book I reviewed, which takes its considerable strength from the bleak march of its facts.

Cleveland Karma

Re Terence Sheridan's piece "Dennis, the Menacing Mayor of Cleveland" (May 1):

As a former Clevelander, and a former member of the same city room where Dennis Kucinich once go-ferred coffee, I can attest that Sheridan's piece was both accurate and incisive.

Sheridan once tried to kill me, too—by dropping me out of a moving car a few blocks from his home. On the other hand, my father almost killed Sheridan once—mistaking him, late one night, for an intruder.

All of this is true, and obviously a direct result of Cleveland's very special karma.

Joe Eszterhas
San Rafael, California

We Remembered Nick Drake

Appreciated the informative, touching article on Nick Drake by Arthur Lubow (May 1). His music is timeless; it will always be powerful. Making the four unissued songs available would be a credit to Island Records.

Anyone who appreciates the music of Drake should listen to John Cale's *Paris 1919* (Reprise Import). Cale admits to having been influenced by Drake when recording this disc. *Pink Moon*, the last Drake album, *was* issued in the U.S. (Island), but was deleted from Island's catalogue because of poor sales.

Arthur Lubow's writing is far better than the critic whose memory needed refreshing.

Skip Mowry
Auburn, Maine

I must give credit to a magazine that does such a tender piece on an artist who most of my peers in the industry, let alone the average consumer, know nothing about.

Thank you for spreading the legend of a very talented individual. Nick Drake certainly deserved the recognition.

Frank Horowitz
Associated Labels Promotion Manager
CBS Records
Beachwood, Ohio

Yes, Tommy. . . there is A&R

Tommy Mottola's remark that "record companies don't do what they used to, there's no A&R [artist & repertoire] department anymore to develop acts . . . " in Charlie Haas' article "Rhythm Without Blues" (April 17) may accurately reflect another flaw in several generally flawed record companies, but it is an otherwise inaccurate observation.

Our multi-million dollar recording industry deals with a wide spectrum of managers and entrepreneurs, ranging from creative giants to meddlesome cretins, but it is the very substance of a modern record company to *develop acts*. Selling records over a long period of time with a given artist *is the direct result of that company developing acts.*

Tommy deserves his recent successes, but he maligns many labels and their A&R personnel who quite obviously know what their job is and achieve their goals with or without "managers."

Kip Cohen
Vice President, A&R
A&M Records
Hollywood, California

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DET 11/1

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DET 11/2

Party Lines/by Robert Shrum

JIMMY CARTER'S NO DEAL

"Right now we don't have a legislative program," House Speaker Tip O'Neill bluntly told the President over coffee at an April White House breakfast meeting for congressional leaders. "Where do we go from here?"

Jimmy Carter had just returned from a weekend retreat at Camp David where he pondered exactly that question with his Cabinet and close advisers. He had come down from the Catoctin Mountains with one goal firmly set in mind: Fourteen months into his term, Carter has to fight the impression that Ted Mack is running the government. He is determined to prove that he really *is* competent to be president. In his new scheme, an ambitious legislative program is the last thing he thinks he needs. Frustrated by the energy deadlock, facing bleak congressional prospects for major domestic initiatives, Carter is now treating these programs largely as political window dressing.

Candidate Carter presented himself as an engineer in 1976—and meant it. He went to the White House believing that he could be literally a chief executive, tinkering with the machinery of government, meeting problems with marginal changes, honing moderate solutions to serious but not systemic difficulties. On energy, his very first domestic priority, his dispassionate engineering set off a minefield of antagonistic ideologies and interest groups. By now, the President has been reduced to pleading for the bill not on its domestic merits, but as a function of foreign policy: *Some* energy bill, with or without deregulation, Carter's version or Congress', must be passed before Saudi Arabia starts quoting oil prices in yen instead of dollars. For appearances' sake, Carter is desperate to win—even if, by then, "the moral equivalent of war" has become the practical equivalent of surrender to the oil industry.

The President has learned from his energy experience. "We can't take another pitched battle like that," says a Carter political adviser. It now suits Carter's quest for the semblance of competence, as well as his aversion to ideological controversy, to skirt divisive issues unless shadow boxing for one of them might win him a public-opinion round or two. For example, Carter has decided to fight publicly for tax reform (a bill that has little or no chance of passing) because his polls suggest he can thereby refurbish his faded populism and blame a "do-nothing" Congress if he has a frail record to run on in 1980.

Even Carter's pursuit of civil service reform, one of his few real legislative priorities, reveals the extent of his domestic abdication. It is an issue that was at the heart of his 1976 campaign, and one Carter can use to prove that he can win in Congress. It is also an issue on which he risks offending only one interest group, the federal bureaucracy—a safe scapegoat for any politician. But Carter has even covered himself there by striking deals with federal employee unions.

Carter's urban plan is a paradigm of his domestic non-policy. By rejecting the bulk of that plan 48 hours before he was scheduled to announce it, then changing his mind at the last second and restoring the cuts, the President left the impression that he really wasn't committed to the cause. And although he was about to hopscotch 14,000 miles around South America and Africa, he rejected a staff suggestion that he travel 1,400 miles round trip to Milwaukee to outline the proposal—and dramatize his support—in an urban setting. Before taking off for Caracas, he did give the first—and only—urban policy speech of his presidency.

Similarly, in 1976, Carter pledged to have national health insurance legislation drafted by his inauguration day. In early 1978, most Administration economists and H.E.W. Secretary Joseph Califano were still resisting the idea, insisting that it was too controversial and expensive. But under intensifying pressure from the United Auto Workers (the union that provided his victory margin in the crucial Florida primary) and from Senator Edward Kennedy (the potential challenger that the White House fears most), Carter ordered up a scheme falling somewhere between private health insurance and Kennedy's plan for public financing. "It looks like Carter will go for the most conservative option," worries an H.E.W. expert working on the plan. And he will only go *that* far, a White House assistant adds, not because he believes that national health insurance can pass now, but because "we know it can't."

The Gordian knot of domestic policy-making has been pulled even tighter by more than Carter's malaprop presidency. "More effort just seems to give us more grief," a Carter aide mourns. Even the President's modest victory in the coal negotiations has turned to ashes: The miners' 37 percent wage increase has become a pretext for inflationary demands by the Teamsters and other unions. And while acknowledging at his May 2 congressional breakfast meeting that inflation may reach 7 percent this year, Carter said all he could—and would—opt for was a traditional Republican remedy: vetoing social spending above his budget. He was essentially forced to recast Gerald Ford's WIN button: Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal blocked enforceable price restraints because they would offend business, and chief of staff Hamilton Jordan warned that tough wage restraints would drain the President's already thin labor support.

Yet even as gestures, Carter's domestic programs have gone awry. Conservatives assail him for proposing them at all. Liberals suspect him of not meaning them. And the strategy of presenting them, because he has to, and then ignoring them, because he can't afford to lose major fights in Congress, is hurting him with middle Americans. In April, Carter's approval rating in both the Gallup and Harris polls fell lower than that of any other elected president in a first term.

Last January, riding up Pennsylvania Avenue to deliver his State of the Union address, Jimmy Carter soundlessly signaled his domestic retreat with a few short strokes of a pen. As drafted, his speech would have cautioned: "Government cannot solve all our problems, define all our visions, eliminate all poverty or reduce all inflation." Carter struck the word "all" from that sentence. It was 30 years after Franklin Roosevelt had traveled the same route to the Capitol to pledge government action for that "one-third of a nation" that was "ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-fed." Now it is only one-fifth of a nation and liberals are becoming neo-conservatives. "The New Deal worked itself out of a constituency," Colorado's Gary Hart says. For Jimmy Carter, all that seems possible these days is—no deal. ●

WIDE WORLD

Restrain yourself Senator: Warren Magnuson, on becoming president pro tem of the Senate. "I wouldn't want anything to happen to the President of the United States, even though I might be in some line of succession. It probably will never happen, but it's nice to think about, anyway."

The Insider

Old Time Religion

Carter Takes Worried Staff's Advice: Rebop to Populism

Whooping it up like a banshee, using language written for Cagney ("big-time crooks"), going after doctors *and* lawyers, President Carter seemed delighted on his May western trip to have rediscovered and recycled his populist tendencies. But the Pacific roadshow, a success for the President, was a conscious strategy. Its point was clearly cut: to re-enthrall the quickly drifting blue-collar and liberal Democrats.

The populist plan was decided upon at Carter's April Camp David review of his Administration's failings, following a recommendation by White House pollster Pat Caddell.

WIDE WORLD

Wily: Jimmy Remembers

Exactly how Carter first reacted is still a matter of some debate. Carter speechwriter James Fallows insists that the President got into the swing of the thing immediately, and ordered up something similar to the famous Law Day speech he'd made in 1974 that had established his liberal credentials. Others say it was not quite so easy, that Carter in fact bridled at Fallows' tough draft, saying he had no intention of delivering it, condemning it as "full of rhetoric," and as having gone "too far." In any case, deliver it Carter did, with virtually no changes, to the sound of many hands clapping. The next day he issued the same stinging indictment in Portland, Oregon. One White House assistant wonders, in light of all of this, whether Carter will stick to the populist plan: "He isn't really comfortable with it." Nevertheless, the President got his audiences hot, made the press pay attention, and is expected, by his staff, to hold on to a key element in a crucial strategy to repair his awful approval ratings in the polls. (See "Party Lines" in this issue.) •

HACKING THROUGH THE WASHINGTON BRUSH

WIDE WORLD

Silent snow, secret snow: During his recent visit to the United States, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan told the Secretary of State, in a private session, that the Israeli government hoped— amazingly—that the controversial Carter package of jet sales to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia would be approved. Dayan said that as a former defense minister, he understood the Egyptian and Saudi Arabian need for weapons. He said that he thought the sale might be necessary to maintain U. S. influence with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and keep open the possibility of peace negotiations—an unprecedented concession. But of course, he said to Vance, this was the private Israeli view; his government could say no such thing publicly.

Hatcher in the Rye: After Richard Hatcher, the Mayor of Gary, was called to the White House to consider the post that President Carter offered him—special assistant to the President—he took a long time to make a decision. In fact, through lots of speculation, offers and counter-offers, Hatcher still hasn't accepted or rejected the position which would make him Carter's leading urban black adviser. One line ascribed his refusal to a fear that Gary will fall back into the hands of the old Democratic machine once he leaves. But a more pragmatic reason came out in a conversation Hatcher had with a friend soon after meeting with Carter: Hatcher said he was worried that the President had told him he would not report to the Chief Executive himself, but to the Chief's chief of staff, Hamilton Jordan.

Politics

Grand Jury Reportedly Ready To Indict Bert Lance

A White House source claims that an Atlanta grand jury is "very close" to handing down a criminal indictment against former budget director Bert Lance. The source says that Lance has been engaged in plea bargaining with Justice Department prosecutors for some time, in hopes of pleading guilty to a misdemeanor and avoiding both felony charges and a trial. A trial, of course, might bring out details embarrassing to President Carter, who took a number of free rides on Lance's corporate aircraft. A Justice Department spokesperson would only say "No comment." •

In Colorado, JC Eats Crab At Rick's Cafe Americain . . .

In Casablanca, everyone came to Rick's, and in Denver, Jimmy Carter did.

A Secret Service agent checking out Rick's Cafe in Denver for the President's Colorado visit to hype solar energy on Sun Day, May 3, stopped in astonishment at the entrance to Rick's Cafe in Denver. "Is it always like this?" He asked the manager, eyeing the crush of swaying singles. The agent had stopped by on Friday night, commonly known as "Zoo Night," when singles and Goodbars jam the place to capacity.

The White House decision to eat at Rick's was based on the restaurant's solar power, used primarily to heat up the dishwater and one solar heated dining room. Rick's found out about one week in advance that the President was planning a visit, but they got used to the idea in a hurry: The Secret Service started moving in. "Oh, it's real Dick Tracy to me," sighed manager Paul Hutchens. The agents came in every day for the week previous to the President's visit, "and you'd know they were there because of their beepers," according to Kathy Kuperman, who waited on the President. "Once I had this guy hog my table for *four hours* just staring at the rafters. He didn't move."

Another waitress reportedly was asked by a Secret Service agent to sit down and have a drink. "I've got to work," she said. The big shot told her, "Listen honey, if that's what you're worrying about, we could clear out this place in five minutes."

Preparing for Jimmy, the restaurant closed at 4:00. Between 5:45 and 6:45, Rick's 90 guests—mostly employees and friends of the restaurant—crowded into a level several steps above the main floor designed for about 75 and began drinking, only to learn that they couldn't descend to the lower level where the restrooms are located. With Secret Service escort, however, several crossed the no man's land to safety.

When Carter came in about an hour later, the guests applauded. "They didn't gawk as much as I expected," Kuperman said. The President made a hit when he shook hands with those on the upper level and told them he'd rather stay up there with them.

But he returned to the presidential entourage to eat a hot crab and avocado sandwich. Kuperman said she witnessed a major exchange between Carter and Energy Czar James Schlesinger on the subject of bean sprouts. "They're very good for you," Schlesinger told Carter.

—Sandra Widener

Coal Porters Organize

Blue Diamond Miners Will Make Stockholder Plea for UMW Rights

The 22-month battle for United Mine Workers' representation of about 130 workers at the Blue Diamond Coal Company's Justus Mine in Stearns, Kentucky, will soon be waged not only on the mine-site picket line but at the front door of some of the company's largest stockholders. Pickets in New York, Atlanta, Detroit and Knoxville will stress the company's poor safety record (At Blue Diamond's Scotia Mine, 26 men died in two explosions in 1976, and the company has spent years on a government black list because of unsafe working conditions) and long history of anti-union activities.

Sensing such a move late last winter, Blue Diamond bought back entire holdings of small stock owners, ostensibly to "attain economy and efficiency in its operations." But this move also maintains Blue Diamond's status as a privately held company, exempting it from laws requiring certain disclosures of corporate practices and finances.

Among the stockholders that should soon expect a visit from angry miners are the John Bulow Cambell Foundation (This Blue Diamond shareholder is associated with the Presbyterian Church USA); Berry College in Rome, Georgia (Blue Diamond's president is on the school's Board of Visitors); Citibank of New York (which holds over 70,000 shares of Blue Diamond stock in account); and the Park National Bank in Knoxville (The bank's vice chairman is on Blue Diamond's board of directors).

Other targets include McLouth Steel Corp., Detroit, the nation's 11th largest steelmaker, which also has Blue Diamond as its largest stockholder, and Heppenstall Company, a Pittsburgh machinery manufacturer which is a Blue Diamond subsidiary. Both McLouth and Heppenstall have contracts with the United Steel Workers. The UMW better hurry to Pittsburgh, however. Rumor has it that Blue Diamond may be planning to move Heppenstall to the non-union South.

—Bill Bishop

Seems like old times

. . . And Largest Nuke Demo Ever Blocks Tracks to Atomic Plant

On April 29, a crowd of 5,000—the largest group ever to demonstrate against nuclear power in the U.S.—met by the railway leading to the Rockwell International-operated nuclear plant in Rocky Flats, Colorado. The demonstration, which took two years to plan, coincided with Jimmy Carter's Sun Day tour to Colorado. Among the demonstrators was Daniel Ellsberg. "I am willing to stay on the tracks till this President or his successor stops nuclear production . . . Carter . . . has not found the power to stop production of nuclear power at Rocky Flats. We will give him that power." After six days of continuous rain and snow, what Ellsberg called a "nonviolent militant resistance," was halted by the arrests of the 28 protestors who had not yet left for home and work. They were released with no bond, and returned to re-set up camp. They planned to stay until May 27, the day of protests in New York and San Francisco. Two days later a train arrived. Two cabooses were filled with police. They were arrested again—bond: $200. "We will be back as soon as we can," one protestor screamed. A sign on one train car read: "For Radioactive Material Use Only—Empty—Rocky Flats."

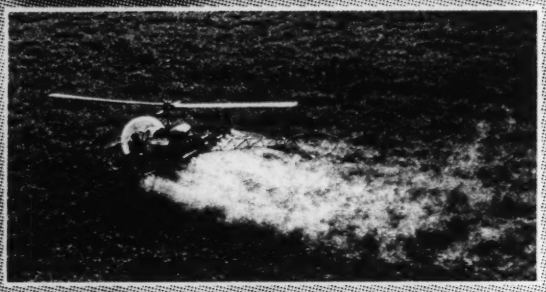
—Stephen Foehr

JOSEPH DANIEL

Ellsberg: Will stay on tracks

Insider Special Report

BEYOND PARAQUAT: COCAINE ERADICATION



FRED WARD/BLACK STAR

Even while the paraquat scare gains momentum, the U.S. government is considering another eradication plan—this time for the coca fields of Bolivia and Peru.

The Agency for International Development (AID, an arm of the State Department) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) have been sponsoring a two-year study to determine which fields should be targeted. A few "traditional" growing areas will be left unmolested, presumably. We've obtained the text of an unpublicized speech in which Dr. Robert L. DuPont, the director of NIDA, outlined the plan. Speaking in Miami last November 1 to a group of "Narcotics Coordinators" (officers in charge of drug matters at the various U.S. embassies in Latin America), DuPont was straightforward: "We should aim to eradicate all coca production in excess of that needed for local Andean Indian consumption and for legitimate pharmaceutical export," DuPont said. "The technology for eradication of coca fields is available and is not prohibitively expensive. However, the will to apply eradication techniques is lacking."

Bemoaning the fact that in Bolivia and Peru "coca chewing and coca growing are traditional, indigenous and relatively harmless economic and social activities," DuPont called for the eradication of "EXCESS CULTIVATION" (capitalized in the text of his speech). He revealed that NIDA has been funding field work in Bolivia by anthropologist William Carter to determine where traditional coca ends and the excess begins. Carter's project is one of the many being conducted by the AID mission in La Paz.

According to DuPont, "The AID project in Bolivia on coca consumption is designed to assess the extent of coca consumption among traditional users. Amounts consumed, regions of production, and individuals involved are being investigated. Most important, the question of how much coca production is needed to satisfy traditional consumption is being asked systematically."

We called DuPont and he repeated his sense of urgency about coca eradication. "There has been an exponential increase in cocaine production in Latin America," he said. "No more than about 20 percent is now devoted to traditional consumption and legitimate export use." (Among the legitimate uses DuPont mentioned was "as a flavoring for Coca Cola. It's still used for that y'know.")

The technology is no problem, DuPont said. "That bush is very easily destroyed with all kinds of herbicides or by mechanical means.... I think herbicides are probably the best way. But that's not an issue."

Paraquat wasn't an issue either, until recently. In his Miami speech, DuPont called the Mexican eradication program—in which opium poppies are sprayed with the herbicide 2,4-D and marijuana with paraquat—a "substantial success," adding, "I am convinced that the same successful formula of elimination at the source can be applied to Peru and Bolivia .... Under the new leadership of Peter Bourne and Mathea Falco, I am sure we will do it." (Dr. Bourne and Ms. Falco are chief drug-policy advisers for the White House and State Department respectively.)

"Coca eradication," DuPont predicted, will be "far easier than eradication of either opium or marijuana." It will also be more efficient, he argued, than attempts to disrupt the distribution system. "We can, I am sure, help the Colombians do a better job of impacting the laboratories and the trafficking system. But this is unlikely to be the weakest point in the chain of cocaine supply. It seems clear that going after the source—when those coca plants are out in the open for years at a time—is a much cleaner and ultimately a more effective approach to this problem. Coca is a perennial crop requiring four years of cultivation to reach harvest. This means that identification and eradication efforts must only take place once every four years in each area."

According to DuPont's estimate, seven million Americans have tried cocaine. If the coke eradication program is carried out, whichever herbicide is used may become an issue to those people—just as paraquat did, after the fact. On that front the Carter Administration has been doing its damnedest to ignore the problem. When officials have been candid about paraquat—as in the case of HEW Secretary Califano's now famous March 12 warning that "marijuana contaminated with the herbicide paraquat could lead to permanent lung damage for regular and heavy users of marijuana, and conceivably for other users as well"—the candor has come very late and was forced, politically, by critics about to break the story themselves. Nixon was "candid" in such circumstances, too.

Actually, the warning could have come a year earlier. In February 1977, Keith Stroup, director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), relayed to Peter Bourne rumors that contaminated weed was reaching the U.S. market. Bourne didn't act until May, when Senator Charles Percy, told of the same rumors by aides, wrote a letter to Secretary of State Vance questioning the U.S. role in Mexico's drug-eradication program and asking specifically about paraquat.

Bourne could have halted U.S. support for the program

at this point and issued a public warning on the basis of existing studies showing that paraquat, when inhaled, causes severe lung damage in animals. Instead he convened a White House conference on the subject and undertook a drawn-out, more "scientific" investigation (in which the government grew its own "Mexican" from seed). By the time this study yielded "preliminary results" in March of this year—thirteen months since Bourne himself was first warned—the Administration could no longer blame paraquat on Nixon/Ford. It had become *their*

WIDE WORLD

DuPont: Determined to poison

baby. NORML was suing *them* under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 to stop funding Mexico's drug-eradication efforts. Whatever ambivalence Dr. Bourne may have felt at the outset turned to defensiveness and, finally, to advocacy.

The government has been fighting the NORML suit tooth-and-nail (a ruling from Judge Joseph C. Waddy of the U.S. Federal District Court for Washington, D.C., is expected shortly as we go to press). Bourne has been poohpoohing the widespread reports of paraquat-induced illnesses, noting on May 1 that "there has not been a single substantiated case of adverse effects from paraquat."

But others view the medical situation differently. Dr. David E. Smith of the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic in San Francisco reports 16 cases of severe lung damage that he attributes to paraquat intake. Dr. Kaye H. Kilburn of the Mt. Sinai Medical Center—one of the few investigators who have studied the effect of paraquat on animals—describes the damage it does as "cumulative and insidious." Which means one needn't cough up blood or collapse from pulmonary fibrosis in order to have suffered damage from paraquat. Whatever respiratory difficulties one might have expected in later life might occur a bit sooner.

Two key statistics are now turning out to be more grim than the White House had been projecting. The percentage of paraquat-tainted weed inundating the dozen or so testing labs around the country is shockingly high—Pharm Chem in Palo Alto, the best known, reports 36 percent as of May 1. Also, the amount of paraquat that survives burning and enters the lungs intact is in the range of 10–50 percent, according to NIDA's latest gas chromatography tests.

Considering the year-long Government "study" of paraquat, one has to wonder why those in charge couldn't have phoned the Drug Enforcement Administration in San Diego, gotten some samples of paraquat-tainted marijuana confiscated along the Mexican border, and done the gas-chromatography tests *in one week*. Is "scientific method" now being used to justify the excesses of bureaucracy?

Peter Bourne's wishy-washiness has cost this country's marijuana smokers more than a year of needless exposure to paraquat. (There are 15 million regular smokers by government estimate. If 50 percent of the imported weed is Mexican, and 25 percent tainted, almost 2 million people have been exposed to paraquat. Even assuming that half the users smoke only home-grown, the figure is still enormous: one million.)

The Mexican spraying program goes on, of course, with full U.S. support—$13.5 million scheduled for fiscal year 1979, which will bring the total since 1973 to about $80 million.

—Fred Gardner

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Pacific Overtures

FBI Snuggles in on Brownites In California Corruption Probe

As reported before (The Insider, March 6) the FBI is conducting a serious probe into corruption in California politics. The probe is now moving more deeply into areas sensitive to the crowd around California governor Jerry Brown, sources close to the investigation have told us.

One target of the investigation is powerful Brown moneyman Charles Manatt, a former state Democratic chairman whose troubles can easily become Brown's in this election year. According to informed sources, Manatt is the lure that prompted the FBI California probe originally. "They said they had gotten on this thing because of a bank down in Southern California that Manatt was involved in—that's how they got started in California," one politico interviewed by the FBI told us. Manatt has denied any wrongdoing, and no specific charges have been leveled against him. The fact that Manatt is being investigated by the FBI could still prove embarrassing to the governor, however. According to one well-placed Brown aide, "Chuck likes to consider himself close to the sources of power, he likes to impress his clients by saying, 'When I was talking to Jerry yesterday.' "

Even more troubling for Brown could be the fact that the FBI is now asking questions about the activities of private health care companies. The biggest controversy has been over Prepaid Health Plans (PHP), which contract with the state to deliver health care to Medi-Cal recipients. Just last month, the U.S. Senate Investigations Subcommittee issued a report which described the administration of the plan under both Reagan and Brown regimes as "grossly mismanaged" and "plagued by a medical commercialism that was often nothing more than profiteering."

One of the PHP's mentioned in the report is Omni-Rx Health Care Inc., which until 1976 held lucrative state contracts. Manatt's law firm has done work for Omni-Rx and other health firms.

Some former health department aides claim it was Brown's indifference which allowed Omni-Rx and other providers to allegedly pile up big profits at state expense. "Brown's passivity made it possible for the most obstreperous and avaricious elements in the PHP industry to get to the political apparatus through people like Manatt," a source close to the health department alleges.

At the same time, some legislative sources are claiming that the FBI has brought in U.S. Justice Department attorney Melvin Dildine to help run the probe because the local U.S. attorney, Herman Sillas, once Brown's director of the Department of Motor Vehicles, "owes his political life to Jerry Brown." Sources close to the investigation, however, say it was a desire to speed up the probe—not political considerations—which led to Dildine's appointment.

Meanwhile Brown campaign manager Gray Davis persistently insists none of this will hurt Jerry's re-election chances. "No one in the executive branch has been mentioned," Davis says. He points out most PHP problems have been lessened by the state's reductions in the program.

But even if the health care system is now trouble free, the investigation of possible past wrongdoings could add up to a serious political problem for Brown, who is already sagging in the polls. If either the FBI or the Senate probes hit pay dirt, it will take all of Brown's ample media skill and still large storehouse of goodwill with the public to keep his Sacramento, as well as Washington, options open past November.

—Paul Grabowicz and Joel Kotkin

The Insider Interview:

UPI Fires Pulitzer Winner Over Double Exposure

On Monday, April 17, a rival AP photographer yelled from a window to UPI's Jim Schweiker that he had won the Pulitzer Prize. On Wednesday, Schweiker said there had been a mistake and he stripped himself of the award. On Friday he was fired. In Indiana, they're still outraged and Schweiker more than most.

He received the prize for a shot of crazed Tony Kiritsis with a gun wired to the head of businessman Richard Hall during the three days he held him hostage. "All I remember is that I had a lot of trouble focusing my camera," Schweiker says. He had fallen on ice and fractured a finger ten minutes before the shot was taken—at the time he was in shock. Along with two stringers, he shot "more than 24 rolls that night. Fifteen were transmitted to New York."

The day after the Pulitzer Prize went to Schweiker, the mother of a stringer for UPI John Blair called to say she had seen a "similar" photo in her son's portfolio. "I was the one who determined it was John's film," Schweiker says. "There were some frames at the start which told me it probably wasn't my film, although the pictures sure looked like it. I shot one identical to it.

UPI

"Thursday I talked to New York. They came to the same conclusion." And, the next day, a nice decision: "They decided I had to go. . . . My gut feeling is they were looking for a scapegoat. I was the obvious one to hang it on. They were trying to blame the whole thing on me."

One UPI veteran says that "the company got egg on its face and wanted to shift the blame." UPI's vice president for news pictures F. W. Lyon says, "We deny that he was made a scapegoat." People in Indiana, we told Lyon, say Schweiker was an outstanding photojournalist and say he'll be missed. Lyon graciously replied: "No comment."

It had been New York that submitted the entry with Schweiker's credit, since they transmitted the picture in February. UPI "accepted Schweiker's resignation" only after Schweiker hired an attorney. Schweiker had just been gearing up for his tenth Indianapolis 500, a massive effort in which he had commanded legions of photographers for UPI. "It takes two months of my life." We asked him what he thought UPI would do without him. "Place third in a field of two." But what would he do? Where would he go? "I'm shooting for the AP. I'd love to win a Pulitzer for them."—*Tom Cochrun*

Sheikh Chic

Even in California, Bad Taste Can't Win Community Respect

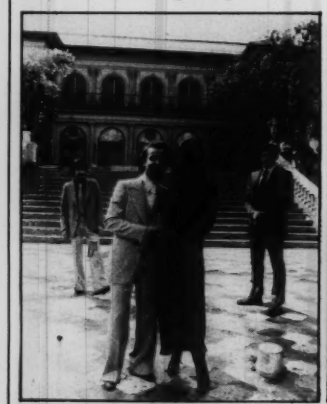
And it happened that a young and prosperous Arabian sheikh, with a lovely young wife and two offspring, transported his family unto Beverly Hills and there bought a huge mansion on the Sunset Boulevard. So dashing and generous was this sheikh that he began to make his mark in that land, thus thrilling the high-class citizenry. Mohammad S. A. Al-Fassi was his name, a 23-year-old relative of Saudi King Khalid and he represented his family's vast Al-Fassi Trading Corporation. He learned to mingle well, buy drinks and dance with the big shots and was, all in all, chic sheikh.

Then, alas!—Things went over the edge. Valorous Al-Fassi blew a wad—over $2 million—to develop his 3.5 acre spread. Italianate statues in front were soon painted flesh tone—their bushy genitalia touched up—the white stucco turned to bilious green, and on the fences real shrubbery gave way to plastic flowers. Mideast hooked far west: Tour buses began pulling up, locals stopped in their BMWs and stared. But the neighbors! They hated the sheikh's taste and, drawing scimitar, started talking about trying legally to stop the Arab princeling from making his place (some called it "dirty Disneyland") Southern California's top tourist draw: Zone that palace.

So it was that the sheikh boiled hot. He sent his wife home (he won't say how many like her he'd left behind) and is appearing with another, even more beautiful. He was steamed. He hinted perhaps that Beverly Hills' Jewish population was just out to get him because, he told us, "Sunset Boulevard is known the world over and I am the first big Saudi Arabian to live here, and because of the religious affiliation of Beverly Hills, they are afraid Arabs are taking over."

And the sheikh stewed. He broodingly rejected Hollywood stars' requests for bashes in his mansion's underground disco. To us, the tiny, balding Mohammad Al-Fassi lowed: "I just want to be alone." But determined to continue his decorative path of terror, he holds to the idea that in America every man's home is his business—the same statues would have brought him fines if he was back in puritanical Saudiland. "But," he shrugs, "you see back there, we have high walls—you can't tell what's going on inside."

—*Joel Kotkin*

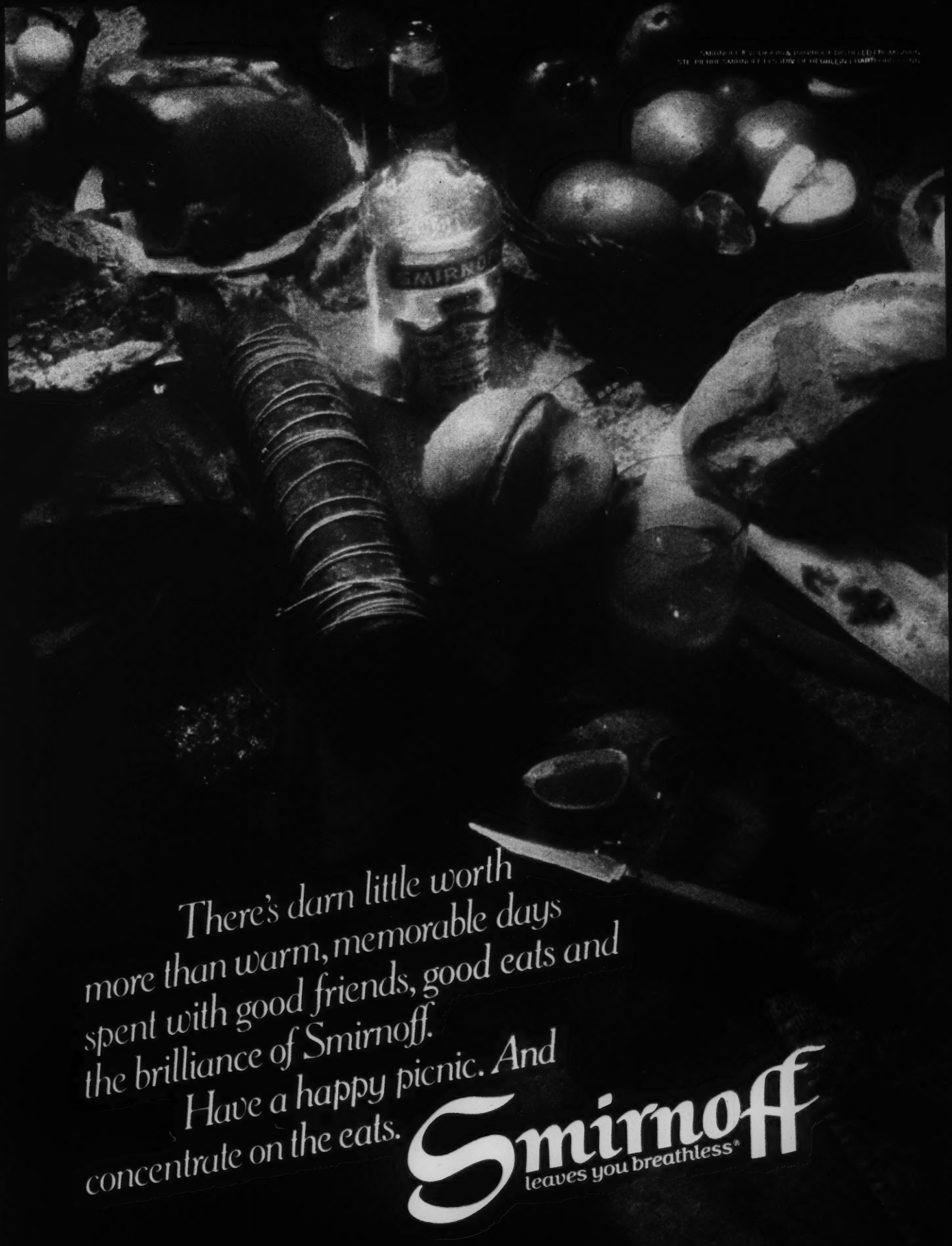


Al-Fassi and Mrs.: Love nest

Clamshell Alliance

JOHN BARR/LIAISON

Statue of Limitations


There's darn little worth
more than warm, memorable days
spent with good friends, good eats and
the brilliance of Smirnoff.
Have a happy picnic. And
concentrate on the eats.
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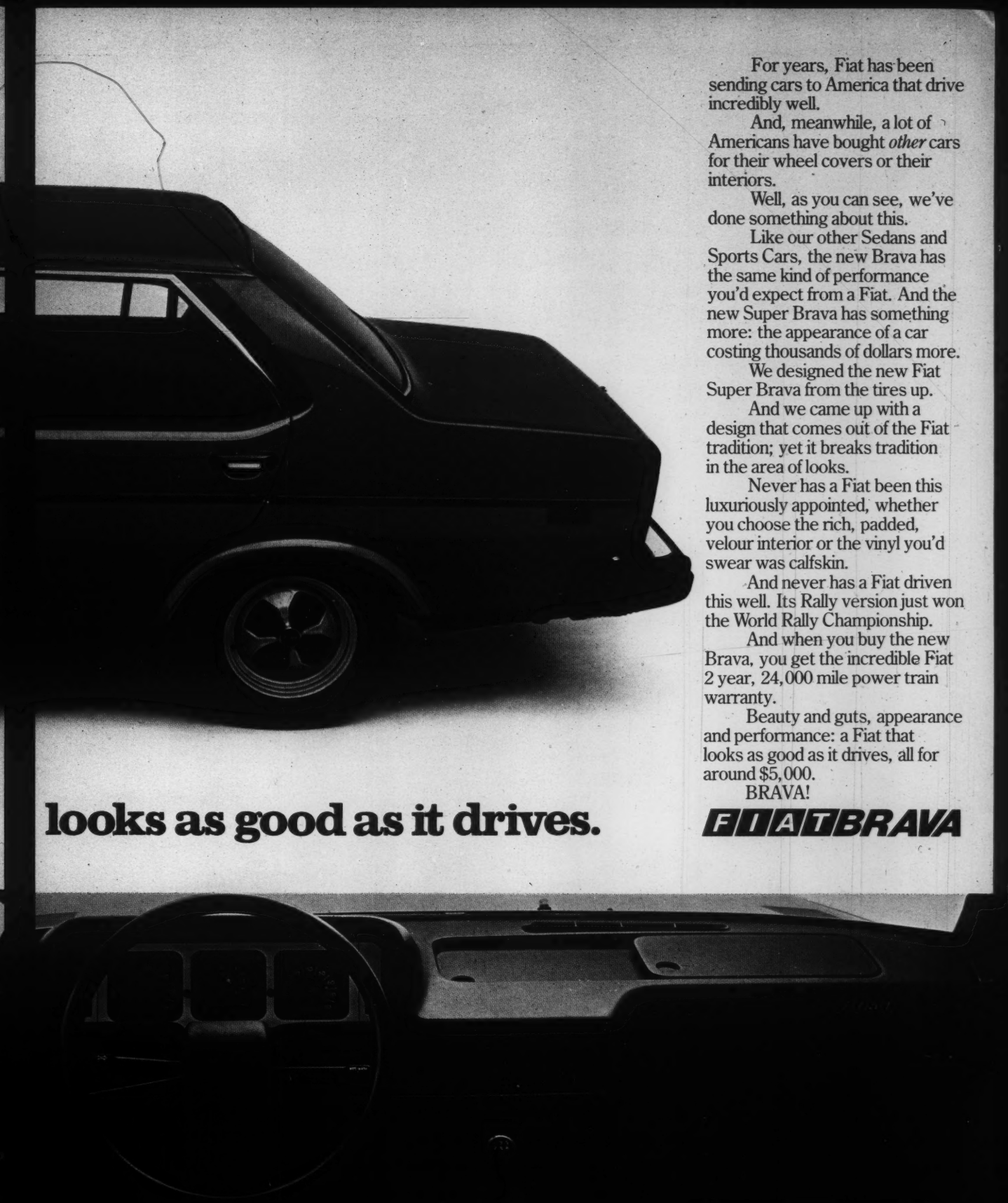

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NewTimes

Can U.S. Farmers Kick The Petrochemical Habit?

Department of Agriculture officials say farmers can't grow lush fruits and vegetables commercially without poisons. We say they're wrong

by Daniel Zwerdling

Americans have not seen such desperate farmers since the Great Depression. But now, on a crisp March day in Washington, 50 shouting farmers have crashed through the doors of the Agriculture Department, roughed up the department's inspector general and his security chief and have seized an inner patio, forcing the government to call in fully armed federal riot police to evict them. And unless the government gives them higher prices, more than 4,000 American Agriculture Movement strikers say, they'll shut down the land like General Motors shuts down a chassis factory; they won't plant any more crops.

The sight of farmers striking for higher prices to solve their plight is a sad spectacle, like watching a victim of stomach ulcers grope for a bottle of Maalox. For the warning signs are becoming clear: America's Green Revolution, three decades of booming agricultural growth hooked on a chemical fix, has finally reached its limit—and now the chemical era is pushing the nation's farmers toward disaster. But low prices are the least of their problems.

Sixteen years after Rachel Carson's classic, *Silent Spring*, farmers are not reducing their $8-billion-a-year chemical habit but rapidly increasing it. Farmers in the Corn Belt will spray more than twice as much fertilizer and almost five times as many pesticides on each acre this year than they did only a dozen years ago—while some chemical bills have surged 800 percent.

Consumers are worrying about the growing number of pesticides that may cause cancer, mutations or birth defects. The Environmental Protection Agency has virtually banned seven best-selling poisons in the past few years, but researchers now believe that tens of thousands of pesticides may actually contain cancer-causing substances. "Trying to regulate problems like these," one EPA official said gloomily, "is obviously a horrendous if not impossible task."

But farmers are worrying about mounting pesticide problems in the fields. Little-publicized evidence in government and university files shows that in major crops from corn to cotton, from onions to oranges, pesticides have warped the ecological balance so drastically that pest damage is twice as bad as it was before the pesticides were even invented. "Many producers are now on a chemical treadmill," warns scientist Dale Bottrell of the Council on Environmental Quality, "a treadmill leading toward bankruptcy."

And while most Americans think the Dust Bowl is a chapter in high school history books, government investigators are thinking the unthinkable: The nation may be heading toward another one. Blame the coming crisis, government researchers say, on intensive chemical methods of agriculture that have weakened and abused the once-fertile farmlands and made them vulnerable to savage erosion. "We have abused our soils tremendously over the last three decades," says USDA soil scientist James Parr. Without drastic changes on the farms, Parr warns, "it will be setting the stage for disaster."

Striking farmers should turn their backs on Washington and make a pilgrimage to the fields of Valley, Nebraska. For there, on 760 acres in the Corn Belt quilt of crust-brown cornstalks and the chartreuse sea of soybeans, they'll find some crucial answers to their problems. Commercial farmer Del Akerlund could care less about soaring petrochemical costs and the erosion crisis and increasing armadas of pests. In a nation where artificial fertilizers and pesticides are a way of life, Del Akerlund has created a fertile and productive farm world that is 100 percent, completely organic. "I haven't used one drop of chemical fertilizers or pesticides," Akerlund says, "since 1967."

Organic? To most Americans raised on the lessons of agribusiness, an organic farm means a backyard garden or a natural food store bin full of worm-eaten tomatoes. Or, as former USDA Secretary Earl Butz used to say, the primitive way our great-grandfathers farmed, scarcely befitting our modern nation. "Before we go back to an organic agriculture in this country," Butz sniffed on national television, "somebody must decide which 50 million Americans we are going to let starve or go hungry."

So when I pulled off the highway, 30 miles outside Omaha, and saw Akerlund's organic farm with my own eyes, I felt puzzled, disoriented. I didn't find a city dropout struggling with a hand plow and a horse; Akerlund, soft spoken and khaki-clad, was driving his $50,000 harvester by his 300-head cattle feedlot and twin cement silos. He wasn't living in a wood-stove cabin; Akerlund sat down to Sunday dinner in his modern split-level with plush pile carpeting and a super-appliance kitchen out of *Better Homes and Gardens*.

And it wasn't worm-ravaged corn that Akerlund showed me as we drove the length of his fields, stretching for almost a mile. "Akerlund's corn is number-one grade, the highest quality possible," says bookkeeper Jeanette Muhle at Lincoln

Washington-based freelancer Daniel Zwerdling writes frequently on consumer and environmental issues.

PHOTOGRAPH · FRANK "SHORTY" WILCOX/THE IMAGE BANK

Grain, Inc., a big commercial distributor that buys almost exclusively from chemical farmers. "He's in the top 10 percent of the farmers we buy from quality-wise, and I'd bet he's even higher than that."

Let Del Akerlund shatter three decades and billions of dollars worth of the great American agribusiness myth: Chemical farming is not the only way. Organic farming works. During an investigation that took me from the Corn Belt to California to the fertile farmlands of Europe, I found large-scale, sophisticated, commercial farms raising high-quality foods organically—lush citrus orchards and vast acres of cauliflower and broccoli and peppers and soft lettuce. I found scientific studies conducted by major research centers in Europe—studies virtually ignored in the United States—which suggest that organically grown foods can be not only as good as their chemical counterparts but in some ways superior.

And while I had always assumed that farmers go organic to earn spiritual points while conventional farmers go the chemical route to earn money, here's the biggest irony: The organic farmers I spoke with have abandoned their chemical habits in the past decade precisely because the financial and ecological costs of the chemical system were driving them out of business.

"If we hadn't switched to these organic methods we wouldn't have a vineyard today," says grape grower Stephen Pavich, swiveling in the office chair of his $3-million grape ranch in Delano, California. "Our ground was gone to hell. We would have gone bankrupt. But with these biological methods our yields are better than many of our neighbors', and while they've reached their peak," Pavich says, smiling, "our potential is starting from here on up."

Agribusiness officials like to talk about "going back" to the era Before Chemicals—B.C.—as though it were prehistory. But sift through voluminous USDA studies from the 1930s, long forgotten and out of print, squirreled away in the USDA archives outside Washington, D.C., and you'll discover that top government and land-grant university scientists back then were developing organic farming into a complex, sophisticated, self-renewing ecological system—the kind of stable ecosystem about which environmentalists of the seventies only fantasize.

The way sophisticated farmers of yore practiced it, an organic farmer grew a rich diversity of crops, rotating them every year from one field to the next. That way, no pests attracted to any one crop could sweep through the farm. Farmers didn't need to buy nitrogen fertilizer from the factory: They actually grew the crucial nutrient by planting crops that sucked nitrogen from the air and "fixed" it in the soil. And as the vo-

Animal Farm on Capitol Hill

"What I am doing today is not what I would recommend if I were a private citizen," Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland told a startled Senate committee while testifying on the Carter farm bill last year. Even in an administration where loyalty to the party line is a casual virtue, it was surprising to hear the new Secretary so clearly telegraph his dissatisfaction.

It all started during the 1976 campaign, when Carter vaguely promised farmers a return equal to their average costs of production, a pledge that even then did not sit well with his agrarian constituents. What farmers were seeking was 100 percent "parity"—a concept devised during the New Deal in order to provide farmers with price levels (in current dollars) equal to those that prevailed between 1910 and 1914, the golden years of farming. Agricultural techniques developed after World War II—such as hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers—have rendered the formula increasingly irrelevant; an acre that yielded 35 bushels of corn in 1930 will yield 94 bushels now.

The real problem with Carter's bill was that it guaranteed farmers who let a portion of their land lie fallow target prices that fell $1 short of the average production costs for wheat. (Farm prices in congressional debate are often expressed in terms of wheat prices, though they are meant to include other commodities as well.) The only way to justify the Administration's estimate of production costs was to assume that farmers should earn only 1.5 percent on their land investment. "It was absurd," says Owen Donley, an expert for the Senate Agriculture Committee. "They could get 5 percent by selling the land and sticking the money in a bank." Congress responded by raising the Carter target prices to $3.00 a bushel, still 60 cents short of production costs.

But even as the President was signing the bill last September, four farmers were griping about it over coffee in a Colorado truck stop. Their anger was the spark that touched off a farm revolt. Within three months, the American Agriculture Movement had over 300 strike offices, concentrated in the Southeast and in a swath of states from Montana and North Dakota south to Texas, where the last two years of falling international demand for grain hit hardest. (By 1977 the price of wheat had collapsed from $5 a bushel a few years ago to $2.30.) Farmers who joined the revolt were on the average 38 years old. They had bought new machinery and land at high prices, and were mortgaged to the hilt.

The striking farmers blocked highways with tractors, protested on America's main streets in cavalcades of farm equipment and threatened to plant only 50 percent of their own crops or burn half the crops of anyone who decided to plant as usual. They sent Washington an ultimatum: full parity by December 14 or no more farm production. Agriculture Department officials derided the ultimatum: December is hardly the month of planting or harvesting. But when the deadline passed, farmers who had time—if not crops—to burn organized a march on Washington.

The capital had seen nothing like it since the Vietnam protests. Suddenly, work-jacketed farmers were sitting in congressional offices. Anxious staff members called the Agriculture Committee members' offices. "My God, these farmers are here," one complained. "We don't know what to tell them."

There was a minor piece of agriculture legislation scheduled at the time—Senate HR 6782, the raisin promotion bill permitting special privileges to the raisin industry. Desperate members of the Senate Agriculture Committee decided to attach emergency farm price relief to it. No one was willing to give the farmers their wildest dream, a law requiring that all wheat purchasers pay the 100 percent parity price of $5.04 a bushel. That, the Agriculture Department warned, would push food prices up 20 percent. And it would far exceed the costs of production. "The farmers would be in fat city," a staffer on the committee smiled. "The Cadillac people would really be in business."

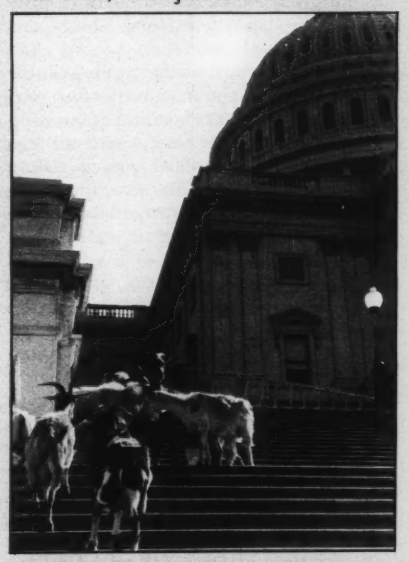
The committee's chairman, Georgia Democrat Herman Talmadge, had a relatively simple alternative. Farmers would retire 31 million acres from production, and the federal government would pay them an average of $75 an acre, at a cost to the Treasury of $2.3 billion dollars. The international relief agencies opposed it. If there were a bad crop this year, literally millions of Third World families would starve. Senator George McGovern offered a more complex proposal which, in effect, would have guaranteed farmers a target price of $4.25 a bushel, 65 cents more than their actual production costs. But Senator Robert Dole, Gerald Ford's running mate in 1976 and a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1980, had his own political hay to harvest. He organized a solid Republican front against the McGovern bill, and the

Senate Agriculture Committee voted it down 10 to 6.

Dole had his own idea, which came to him while he was doodling on a yellow legal pad. He invented the notion of "flexible parity": For each additional 5 percent of land that a farmer set aside above 20 percent, the farmer would receive a higher target price. At a maximum set aside of 50 percent, the farmer would get the full parity of $5.04 a bushel. The striking farmers instantly embraced flexible parity; it was nearly everything they wanted. By March 15, the Agriculture Committee had approved both the Talmadge and Dole bills and sent them to the Senate floor.

Before the Senate voted six days later, the committee's staff director, Mike McLeod, informed McGovern that Talmadge wanted the McGovern proposal—with the target price guarantee lowered to $3.50—offered as an amendment. It passed easily, 58 to 35. Maine Senator Edmund Muskie, who treats his chairmanship of the Budget Committee more as a vocation than an assignment, saved his fiercest denunciations for the Dole scheme. His budget staff gave him a memo succinctly listing the dire effects of flexible parity. It would, they said, add $3 billion to the budget deficit, inflate food costs by $6 billion to $8.5 billion, reduce grain reserves and create a "famine potential in the event of major crop failure." Production would plummet because, as the Agriculture Movement's leaders admitted, a majority—and maybe most—farmers would take the option of setting aside the maximum 50 percent of their land in return for the highest price.

Muskie warned that if the Dole bill passed, there might be no bill at all because of a presidential veto. But that, says a Senate staff aide who has worked with Dole, "was just fine with him. He was cynically using the farmers. He didn't want a bill. He wanted a Carter veto. He wanted an issue." The Senate passed Dole's flexible parity by a narrower margin than the McGovern plan, then voted 67 to 26 for what one Agriculture Committee official calls "a crazy bill" that included both of those proposals *and* Talmadge's land retirement idea. The contradictory mishmash could be straightened out in a conference with the House.



Billy Goats Rough: bill gruffer

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM SMITH

To this point, Muskie had had little or no help from the Administration. Agriculture Secretary Bergland couldn't get in to see Carter during any of the six days between the final committee vote and the Senate floor action. He didn't know what the President would settle for or veto. Bergland couldn't give his own advice to senators, he explained to one of them, because White House economic adviser Charles Schultze and Budget Director James McIntyre might undercut him the next day. Bergland and Carter finally met the very afternoon the Senate voted. Carter had decided to draw a hard line: All he would accept was an increase in the target price to $3.40 a bushel for wheat alone, with no increase for other commodities. He dispatched a letter to Muskie, Talmadge and House Agriculture Chairman Thomas Foley announcing that he would veto anything else.

On April 3, when the House-Senate conference met, the Capitol hallways were packed with farmers chanting: "We want Dole . . . we want Dole . . . " The din was so loud that once inside the committee room, the conferees could hardly hear themselves. Since they faced a presidential veto anyway, they figured they might as well give the farmers what they were chanting for, and weary conferees adopted the Dole scheme with minor changes.

The final Senate vote was on April 10. That morning, Agriculture Department congressional liaison James Webster was laying bets that the Administration had the votes to beat the bill. Inflation had worsened and raising food prices was beginning to look like the worst kind of politics. Urban liberals who had supported the initial Senate bill turned against the conference report. In the end, the bill eked out a 49 to 41 victory despite an hour-long philippic from Edmund Muskie. That night, Muskie exploded at Dole: "I heard you spill . . . garbage on the Senate floor for two days and I don't buy any of it . . . When you keep saying that I don't care about the farmers, at long last I am going to stand up on my two feet and object." (Muskie apologized to Dole the next day.)

Dole kept his cool. He was relatively confident that he would have the last word—the veto and the issue for which he had maneuvered. Congressmen Larry Pressler (a Senate candidate in South Dakota) and Max Baucus (ditto in Montana) had canvassed the House and found 200 votes for the conference report, very close to a majority. Yet when the House decided on April 13, with Speaker O'Neill flashing a thumbs-down at wavering members as they voted, the bill was defeated 150 to 268. And it wasn't just O'Neill's influence, or White House lobbying, or fear of inflation, or the opposition of the urban members— or all these factors together—that so overwhelmingly beat the farmers. As the weeks of protest wore on, the farmers wore out their wary welcome in Congress. "They antagonized members," says a House official. "A lot of the members think they shouldn't have to answer to constituents except on a robotype machine." When the farmers let 40 goats loose on the Capitol steps, Washington Representative Lloyd Meeds expressed a common feeling in the House. "One of those goats was mine," he groused to a colleague. "These farmers got my goat about two days ago."

And in the end all the farmers got was a pittance of a bill. The Senate and House conferees reconvened in late April and voted the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to raise target prices for wheat, but nothing else. The Agriculture Department's chief economist, Howard Hjort, promised that the Secretary would set the price of wheat at $3.40 a bushel in 1978—less than Carter had pledged as a candidate, but not a penny more than as President he said he would accept.

So the farmers went home—mad. And politically they intend to get even. One Montana Democrat now estimates that Carter's approval rating in that state is down to 20 percent. And among Iowa farmers, Senator Dick Clark's popularity fell 12 points in a *Des Moines Register* poll after he voted against Dole's flexible parity proposal in the Senate Agriculture Committee. Dole himself is out on the hustings blasting Carter and the Democrats on farm policy.

The American Agricultural Movement came to Washington 10 years after the Poor People's March announced by Martin Luther King Jr. and led by Ralph Abernathy after King's assassination. Some of the poor people rode into town in covered wagons. Many of the farmers drove down Pennsylvania Avenue in mortgaged $60,000 tractors. And at both ends of that road, on Capitol Hill and at the White House, both groups hit a dead end. The farmers even lost nine of the forty goats they released on the Capitol steps. Those nine goats have never been found. "With beef prices the way they are, someone probably ate them," a California congressman guesses. And the farmers, naturally, didn't get a fair return on their goats either. —**Robert Shrum**

European studies have shown that poisons do not necessarily protect the crops, and that they may actually increase insect attacks

racious crops drained the fertile reserves from the soil, organic farmers carefully replenished them by working nutrient-rich animal manures and other organic matter back into the land. The USDA 1938 Yearbook, *Soils and Men*, blessed this precious organic matter as "our most important national resource"; without it, the USDA report warned, farmers would eventually snuff out "the life of the soil."

But World War II changed all that. As USDA historians tell it, the chemical corporations and the military had built a massive industry to manufacture nitrogen for bombs, and chemists at the Pentagon's Camp Detrick were developing secret poisons for biological-chemical warfare. Suddenly, with peace in Europe and no more enemies to attack, the nitrogen industry and budding biological warfare business faced instant collapse. The solution: Industry would spray the chemicals in the fields of America instead.

"At first the response we got from these chemicals was fantastic," says Akerlund, who, in 1946, was one of the first in his area to use synthetic pesticides. Farmers were able to forget the careful and complex work of nurturing a healthy biological balance in the fields; they could plant vast acres of a single crop, called a monoculture, and then simply spritz on the nitrogen and blast away the exploding insect infestations with a pesticide can. Vast monocultures spread across the nation like a plague—fly over Illinois and it looks like one giant farm, 85 percent of the cropland in corn and soybeans. Yields boomed—not just because of chemicals but thanks to the whole Green Revolution package of super machinery and new hybrids developed in the genetic laboratory. And a powerful industry took a grip on American agriculture, the petrochemical-energy complex. (Pesticide and fertilizer giants such as Mobil, Tenneco, Standard Oil of California, Dow and DuPont produced $10 billion worth of farm chemicals last year alone.)

But the chemical rush couldn't last forever. USDA scientists had warned back in 1938 that while organic farming methods replenish the soil's fertility, the chemical system robs it, sticking back only a handful of nutrients with an easy chemical fix. ITT-Continental does the same sort of thing with Wonder Bread, refining at least 24 precious nutrients from the wheat berry, adding back a handful and then calling the bread "enriched."

"We saw it happening in the early sixties," says Akerlund. "The soil was getting hard and lumpy, we couldn't work it easily anymore and had to keep buying bigger tractors. There was so little organic matter in the soil that the ground couldn't hold water anymore; the rains would run off the fields like water off a duck's back. We were using more and more pesticides, but the weeds were getting so bad we could hardly handle them, and the insects weren't getting any better—if anything they were getting worse." In the late 1950s a local fertilizer dealer was telling Akerlund to spread 33 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer on every acre. "But by the late sixties," Akerlund says, "we were putting on almost five times as much and our yields had stopped going up."

In 1967 Akerlund's chemical bill hit $24,000. "My brother and I just turned to each other one day and said, 'We have to shut those chemicals off.'"

Chemical farmers must spray increasingly more costly insecticides to fight the inevitable pest infestations on their crops. For, thanks to monocultures and growing pesticide resistance, says Cornell University researcher David Pimentel, insect damage to corn has *tripled* since pesticides came to the farms. But Akerlund, like other organic farmers, prevents most pests from invading his farm in the first place by rotating a careful mix of crops, including corn and soybeans, oats, clover and wheat. While a chemical farmer pumps the crops with nitrogen and with a few minerals, Akerlund replenishes his soil with literally dozens of nutrients by growing special nitrogen-fixing crops, spraying ground-up rocks from the air, and spreading animal manure—lots of it, 2,500 tons last year—from cattle operations in the area and from his own feedlot. "We take better care of our soil," says Akerlund, "than ourselves."

"Could an organic farmer make it in this area?" muses Jim Nelson as he tends the counter of the Anderson Feed and Seed Co., off Main Street in nearby Freemont. A sign warns customers: "Soybeans are Not Returnable"; plastic jugs of pesticides line the wall. "I doubt it," Nelson laughs, as he fills a pesticide order for a client. "Organic farmers who didn't put out any herbicides this year would've had more weeds than crops in their rows. One farmer I know sprayed four times this year, and his weeds still came back up." In fact, USDA statistics show that Corn Belt farmers are spraying eight times as much weed-killing poison this year as they did just a dozen years ago. But not Akerlund: His special crop system keeps weeds under easy control. "We had to cultivate a few times during the season," he tells me as I search his corn and soybean fields—without success—for a single weed.

Since farmers in the Valley, Nebraska, area were crisped four years ago by one of the worst droughts since the Dust Bowl, they've been rushing to the farm equipment dealers to buy expensive irrigation systems. "I'd say the number of irrigation systems in this area has increased 50 percent in just the past few years," says county agriculture extension agent James Novotny. But Akerlund says his fields don't need a single pipe. "We've got so much organic matter built up in the soil that it holds on to all the water it can get, like a sponge, every time it rains," he says, leafing through laboratory soil reports that show his fields have 50 percent more precious organic matter than most farmland in the area. It's no mystery why: The old USDA studies show that an organic system like Akerlund's, rich in water-grabbing organic matter, will lose less than half as much water during a rain as a conventional farmer's fields.

Just add it all up. "My total fertilizer and pesticide costs ran about eighty-five dollars an acre last year, plus another eight dollars an acre for the electricity to run my irrigation pumps," says chemical farmer Spencer Wedberg, who has a 1,100-acre farm next to Akerlund's. "I'm very pleased with my yields—it was an excellent year." Akerlund pores through his meticulous records. "I figure we spent fifteen dollars an acre for all our organic materials," he says, "although some years we spend a little more, some years a little less." His yields were virtually the same.

But comparing two farms in a single season can't tell the most important part of the story: where farming is heading over the years. The way Akerlund sees it—with farm chemical prices rising, market prices going haywire, monoculture farmers getting trapped in a boom or bust cycle and going on strike—he's got to come out ahead of his chemical neighbors in the long run. "The great thing about organic farming is we're so flexible now," Akerlund says. "By having different crops we're never trapped by the fluctuation in prices. We know that at least one of our crops is going to have a good price, which will give us a nice, comfortable living.

"And even when there's a recession or a serious drought or some other catastrophe," he says, "we haven't laid out all that money on chemicals like the other farmers do—so we can override those years."

Government researchers say the worst crisis on the horizon is a potential Dust Bowl. Only massive use of artificial fertilizers, a recent Senate report warns, has been able to mask the land's rapidly decreasing productivity—just as drugs prop up a terminally ill patient who should already have died. But time is running out; and erosion nationwide soon "could have a disastrous effect on crop productivity," investigators in the General Accounting Office warn. But Akerlund doesn't need to worry. USDA studies show his kind of organic farming methods can drastically cut the erosion his neighbors' farms are suffering.

Pushed for more evidence—more statistics, more sales figures, more profit margins, more facts—Akerlund smiled. "All that," he said, sweeping his hand toward 760 acres of lush crops, a shed jammed with modern equipment, twin silos bulging with 1,200 tons of top-grade corn, "all that is my evidence."

If Del Akerlund were a lone organic adventurer in this Nebraska corner of the Corn Belt, you could write him off as a fluke. Except he's not. When researchers at Washington University's Center for the Biology of Natural Systems decided five years ago to study some commercial organic farms, they set off to scrape up a handful—and found more than 250 commercial organic operations ranging up to 800 acres in size. When the researchers dissected 14 organic farms and compared them to 14 chemical farms of similar size—the most successful chemical farms local USDA agents could recommend—they produced hard statistics that prove what Akerlund already knows. "While the conventional farms produced somewhat higher yields, somewhat higher, not much," study director William Lockeretz said recently, "the organic farmers had lower costs. And so the net returns per acre on the organic and conventional farms over three years were virtually the same."

Don't dismiss these other organic operations as unique creatures of the Corn Belt, either. Only 20 miles from the agribusiness haven of Salinas, California—where multinational conglomerates grow thousands of acres of lettuce and the odor of pesticides often hangs in the air—I found Mexican-American farmworkers picking 150 organic acres of broccoli, snap beans and other vegetables on Russel Wolter's Odello Ranch. I followed the boxes of organic produce to Frank Capurro & Son wholesalers; forklift trucks were hoisting them under Capurro's "Topless" label into great semi-trailer trucks filled with chemically grown vegetables, bound for markets across the U.S. "I don't care if it's organic as long as it's good," says Frank Capurro, puffing his cigar through phone calls from buyers

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And I found a miracle of modern-day organic farming in the sun-baked fields of Delano, a few hundred miles southeast—Table Grape Capital of the World, according to the agribusiness press. Table grapes are a big-money, fragile business: A cloud of insects or an evening of rain can wipe out millions of dollars of these tender, sugary, skin-bursting fruits overnight. And seven years ago, Stephen Pavich & Sons—700 acres of grapes in California and Arizona, 30 full-time employees plus 150 pickers at harvest, a $400,000 cold storage warehouse right on the freight tracks—was on the verge of collapse. "Our ground was hard as concrete," says Pavich, a farmer since the Depression. "Our grapes were melting off the vines. They were so sick they couldn't hold up long enough for harvest."

"When you're down near the gutter you'll try anything to save yourself," said his son, Steve.

Since 1971, Steve Pavich has created a radically new system of agriculture in his grape fields, step by step. "We've done this based strictly on an experimental approach," he said, as we drove past tons of steaming cattle manure and grape pulps.

You can measure what the organic system has accomplished in the ranch's yields—they're as good as or better than the county average now, and thousands of crates of purple clusters are piled high in the 33-degree warehouse, waiting to be shipped to major supermarkets across the nation. You can describe what Pavich's organic methods have done to the nightmarish problem of pests. "In this area every June there's a build-up of insects which will completely defoliate a vineyard if unchecked," says Jerry Garzoli of Oxychem Delano, one of the biggest pesticide dealers in California. "Most growers spray [insecticides] two or three times a year, and this year many grape crops were sprayed four times because the pests were so bad." Pavich hasn't sprayed a single pesticide on most of his grapes in more than five years. "I have my serious doubts if that's possible," laughs Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner Clyde Churchill, when told about the Pavich ranch. "But I'd sure be impressed if it's true."

Organic farmers often told me you have to *feel* what the organic system can accomplish—literally—in the soil. As I wandered with Pavich through his ranch—endless fields of stumpy, dusty-green vines stretching toward the Sierra Nevadas, fading into the heat mist—we came to a narrow dirt road. On one side was Pavich's organic field; on the other, a conventional, chemically nourished ranch. I walked onto the conventional field, the soil so hard and dry it felt almost like an extension of the road. I tried to claw my fingers into the ground, grappling to work my hand past the rocky, dried lumps. Then I crossed the dirt road into Pavich's vineyard, springing and sinking as I walked as if I were on some giant sponge. I plunged my hand deep into the soil. The dirt was crumbly fine, dark and moist. Pavich brushed back vines drooping with fat bunches of grapes, baring mantis and spider egg sacks—crucial allies in his biological balance of pests. "The key to what we've done here," Pavich called out to me as I searched vainly in the conventional field for a single sign of a spider or an egg, "is we've brought the soil back to life."

To hear most agricultural researchers talk about it, however, the new wave of modern organic farmers might as well be farming on another planet. "To deny American farmers the use of artificial fertilizers," asserts Rutgers University professor R. White-Stevens, "would require the removal of 100 million Americans . . . return some 20 million nonrural people back to the toil of the soil and stoop labor, reduce the present standard of living by 50 percent and retreat to the way of life of a century ago."

It's easy enough for agricultural researchers to dismiss the potentials of organic farming methods, since USDA and the land-grant colleges have virtually refused to study them. "Unfortunately, there really hasn't been very much done on comparative studies between organic and conventional methods," says James Parr, chief of USDA's biological waste management and soil nitrogen laboratory. "One main reason why is that proponents of organic farming have been looked upon as a bunch of nuts."

The few comparative studies I could turn up in the USDA and land-grant college literature are so out of touch with organic methods, at least as farmers like Akerlund and Pavich practice them, that they're ludicrous. Ask researchers at South Dakota State University's agriculture experiment station for the low-down on organic methods, for instance, and they'll send you *Facts About Organic Farming and Gardening*. In one dramatic experiment in Nebraska, the pamphlet observes, researchers planted a "Today's Acre" of corn, spritzed with pesticides and fertilizers and water, and then compared the yield to a supposedly organic "Nature's Acre"—a plot of soil stuck with corn

Continued on page 58

The Proof's in the Produce: Organic vegetables from commercial farmers like Russel Wolter are sold at supermarkets here and abroad

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL ZWERDLING

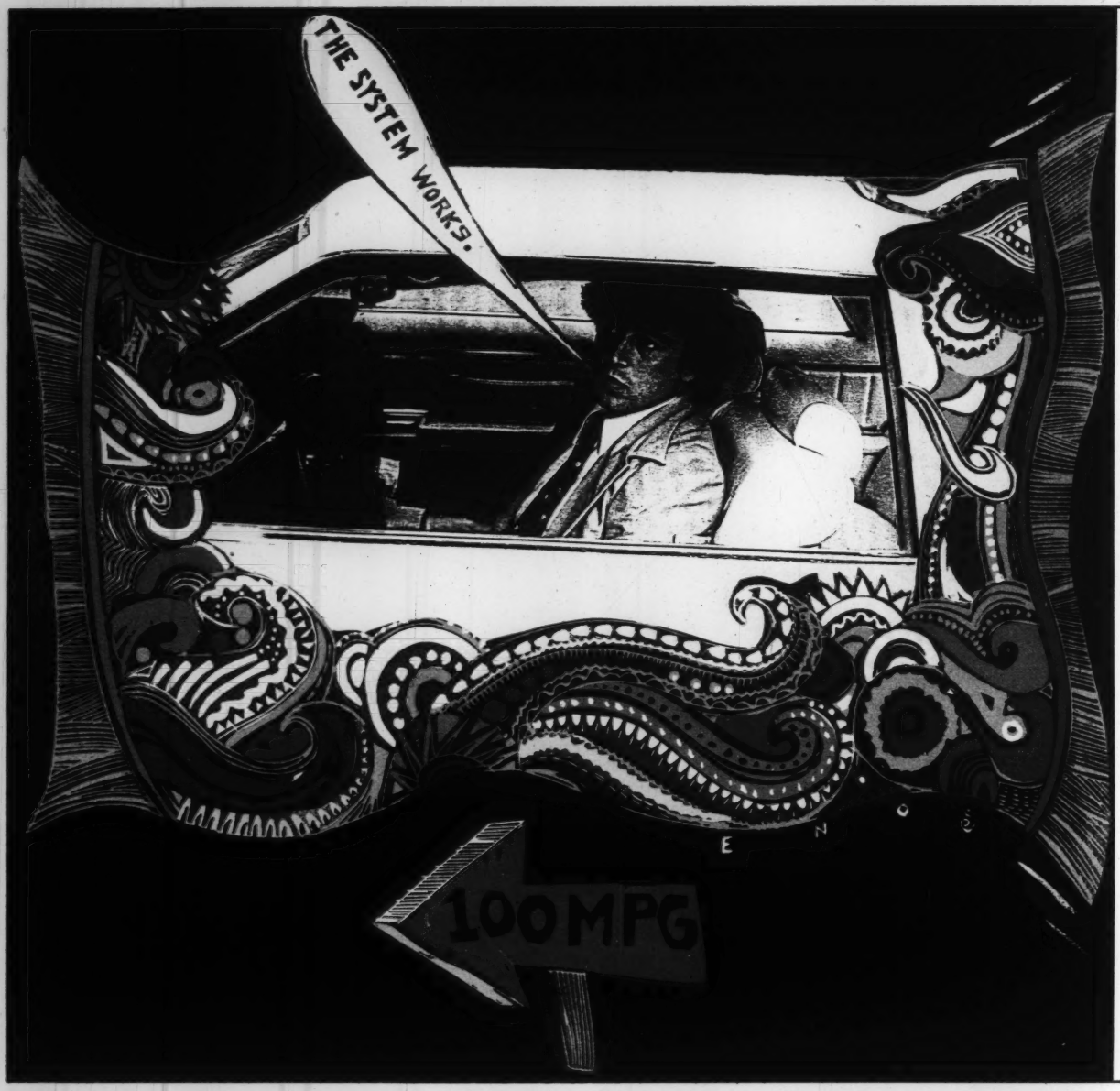
Price Mixing

For most consumers the ultimate question in the organic versus chemical debate comes down to this: Won't eating organic foods hike their grocery bills out of sight? "The major difference between organic foods and the ones available at the supermarket," as *Newsweek* quotes "most experts" in a recent cover story, "is that they cost about twice as much." In fact, University of Illinois researchers have published a report suggesting that if vegetable farmers tried to go organic, a stalk of broccoli would cost $14 a pound.

Nonsense. Economic studies show that organic foods usually cost more than their chemical counterparts only because they're shipped and sold in tiny quantities by small specialty stores, which jack up the retail price. The price of most organic foods at the farm level is precisely what conventional farmers get, no more and no less. "We pay our farmers comparable prices to what conventional farmers are getting on the regular market," says Max Kozek, one of the nation's largest organic wholesalers, who sells mainly to small stores.

But the supreme irony is this: Most of the nation's large-scale organic farmers don't even sell their foods to health food stores, where it would be hyped as "organic" for a high price. Large-scale organic farmers are selling most of their foods on the conventional market. Nebraska farmer Del Akerlund, for example, is selling organic corn to CPC International Inc. You may be eating some right now in CPC's Mazola corn oil or margarine. You may also be buying organic vegetables and lush organic grapes (don't blanch, the United Farm Workers have called off the boycott) at your neighborhood Safeway or Food Fair or Kroger.

But if American supermarket executives still doubt that organic agriculture can earn profits in 1978, they should take their board members to the Swiss town of Taegerwilen near the foot of the Alps. For there the executives will find the spectacular organic fields and greenhouses of the $6 million Biotta fresh produce and juice corporation. Biotta sells its picture-perfect produce, supplemented with vegetables from more than 100 organic farms, to major Swiss supermarkets. The organic vegetables are tagged with special labels and sold alongside their chemically grown counterparts—at exactly the same price. "We have to prove that organic agriculture is possible at reasonable prices," Biotta president Hugo Brandenberger says, "and with capitalistic profits." —*D.Z.*



Out here in the provinces, we hear stories about life in the cities. In the cities, people hear stories about life in the provinces. For those of us who try to make a living telling stories, certain questions refuse to go away: What are people really interested in? Which subject is the subject that affects us all? Where is the story that everyone wants to read?

There are 135 million cars in the United States and 133 million licensed drivers—a considerable potential audience. After the oil companies nearly doubled the price of gasoline in 1974, I started working on a novel about a young mechanic who invents a miracle gas additive, that gets everyone 100 miles-per-gallon. The major hook to the story, as I saw it, was the 100 mpg figure. One hundred is a sacred number, even when applied to profane quantities. Its bulky roundness catches your attention, and it is a perfect multiplier, especially when it comes to money, cars or gallons of gas. Fifty mpg is good gas mileage, as people who own Honda Civics are forever pointing out. But 100 mpg is automotive magic: The figure lies out there at the edge of technology, somewhere between the hazardless nuclear reactor and the perpetual motion machine.

Think of it. For most American, Japanese and European cars, 100 mpg would mean from 1,200 to 2,000 miles between fill-ups. You could drive from New York to San Francisco in a Ford Granada on less than two tankfuls. The average American driver would make eight trips to the gas station each year.

My novel never got written and now it never will, because a young mechanic in El Paso, Texas, by the name of Thomas Hans Venor Wolfgang Peter Ogle, has unknowingly taken the substance of my projected fiction and turned it into fact. At least, that's what Tom Ogle *says* he's done. In April 1977, Tom Ogle drove from El Paso to Deming, New Mexico, and back—a distance of over 200 miles—on what he claimed were two gallons of premium gas. Tom Ogle did this in a 1970 Ford Galaxie (estimated maximum mpg: 17) he had outfitted with a fuel system of his own invention. Before the drive, reporters from El Paso checked the car for hidden tanks or extra hoses and found neither. Then they accompanied Tom Ogle on his 200-mile journey, just to make sure he didn't visit any gas stations along the way. By the time he returned to El Paso, the report-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RANDALL ENOS

A 25-year-old inventor from El Paso claims to have developed a fuel system that will triple your gas mileage. Is there an Oglemobile in America's future?

by Joshua Baer

Tom Ogle's Driving Dream

ers had made up their minds. They declared Tom Ogle a genius and predicted that his fuel system would save America from the Arabs.

According to Tom Ogle, his system yielded 100 mpg, reduced hydrocarbon emissions to practically nothing, cleaned dirty spark plugs and eliminated significant amounts of engine heat and vibration. Tom stated that his system would be on the market in a year and that it would retail for $100 a unit. In August 1977, a wealthy private investor from the West Coast arrived in El Paso and tested Tom's device. According to the *El Paso Journal*, this same anonymous investor purchased the manufacturing and marketing rights after negotiations which lasted through February 1978. The *Journal* quoted "a source close to the young inventor" as saying that a deal had been made "in the neighborhood of $500,000 . . ."

Tom himself said that a representative from a major oil company had offered him $25 million for his device. But, as Tom told the *New York Times*, "We're not selling out at any price. We're going to get it to the public."

I had read about Tom in the *New York Times* and *New Times* (The Insider, June 24, 1977), and, somehow, I *knew* that Tom Ogle's fuel system was not a hoax. When I learned that the system was based on a fogging mechanism that used radiator water and engine exhaust to vaporize gasoline, I was even more certain. No one, I told myself, would make up something like that.

Gerald Keith, Tom Ogle's lawyer in El Paso, told me over the telephone that there was not much he could do.

"Tom's a difficult person to track down," he said. "All I can do is give him your number. He might call you back; then again, he might not."

I had called Gerald Keith to arrange an interview with Tom Ogle. I explained to Mr. Keith that I was definitely not an investigative reporter. I believed Tom's fuel system was authentic; all I wanted was a chance to prove its authenticity in a magazine article.

Gerald Keith told me to call back in a few days. When I called back, he still had not heard from Tom. He gave me the phone number for Tom's car.

I tried it right away. It was busy. I waited a few minutes and tried it again. Still busy. Fifteen minutes later, the phone rang twice and someone picked up the receiver, said nothing and hung up. I called an operator and asked her to try the number. It was busy.

I called Gerald Keith.

"I just talked to Tom," he said. "He says he'll talk to you. Just keep trying that number I gave you. You'll get him."

I hung up and dialed Tom's number. After 12 rings, a man answered. I identified myself and asked to speak to Tom Ogle.

"Tom's not here," said the man.

I told him that I wanted to come to El Paso to write an article proving the authenticity of Tom's fuel system. The man said he was sure Tom Ogle would see me if I came to El Paso. I told him that I would be driving 1,500 miles from California and that I wanted to agree on a date with Tom himself before I left. I said I could be there on March 5.

"There won't be any problem," said the man. "He'll be here then."

"Who am I talking to?" I asked.

There was a short pause. "This is Tom Ogle," the man said. "I get a lot of calls from people I don't know, so, usually, I tell them I'm not here."

I asked Tom if he could spend a couple of days with me in El Paso. I suggested that he and I design a fuel consumption test together and use it as the basis of my article.

"One day should be enough," he said. "And I'll show you the system. It works."

I asked Tom if it was true that the system produced no hydrocarbon emissions.

"Just about," he said. "When the engine's running, you can stand next to the tailpipe and dry your hair. There's no exhaust. Just hot air."

We agreed to meet March 6. Tom said he had no objection to working out a fuel consumption test with me. I told him I would call him as soon as I got into El Paso.

My wife and I arrived in El Paso on March 5, around noon. I started trying Tom's number at 1 o'clock. I tried it until 9:00 that night, but there was no answer. The next morning, I started calling at 9:30. Around 10:30, Tom answered. He said he couldn't hear me, that the connection was bad. I told him I would call him right back.

When I tried the number again, it was busy. It stayed busy for a half-hour. At 11:15 it rang at least 25 times before someone picked up the receiver, said nothing and hung up.

I called Gerald Keith, and he suggested I go to Tom's shop and wait there. The shop was in an unincorporated area just beyond the southeastern outskirts of El Paso. It was a large yellow prefabricated building which had once been a warehouse.

After waiting for an hour in the car, I called Gerald Keith. He said he had no idea where Tom was.

"I'd just wait at the shop," he said. "Tom drops by there every day."

We returned to the shop. A blue Datsun stood in the parking lot. I knocked on the door, and a young man with a Beatle haircut opened it. He introduced himself as Larry Ford and invited us in.

"We'll show you the new system," he said. The shop was divided into an office, a middle room with no visible function and a large garage. Inside the garage were tool chests, electronic engine-analysis equipment, a battered Chevrolet El Camino, a worktable strewn with parts, and a 302-cubic-inch Ford V-8 engine mounted on a bulky steel frame. The V-8 was attached to a transmission which led back to a rear axle and two wheels. The tires were a foot or so off the floor. Mounted on top of the engine, where a carburetor should have been, was a metallic, box-like assembly. This was Tom Ogle's fuel system.

A radiator hose, an exhaust hose and a fuel line ran into the system. The fuel line came out of a two-gallon gas can sit-

Joshua Baer lives in California and is working on a novel entitled Winds.

ting on the floor. The device was about a foot square and looked like it might just fit under the hood of a car.

There was a second man in the garage, working on the El Camino. Larry introduced him as Victor Biddle. Larry and Victor explained that Tom was always late, but that he wouldn't mind if we saw the system work—as long as we didn't take pictures.

Larry played with the butterfly valves and pressed the starter button that was mounted on the side of the frame. The engine tried to start, but failed. He played with the valves some more, pressed the starter, and the engine roared to life. Black clouds of exhaust poured out of the tailpipe. The engine was loud. One of its valve covers was loose. I looked closer and noticed that some liquid—either water or gasoline—was dripping from the underside of the fuel system onto the loose valve cover.

The engine died. Larry walked away from it, shaking his head.

"Tom's the only one who knows how to work it," he said. "Usually, there's no smoke at all. You can stand next to the tailpipe and dry your hair."

I asked Larry if the system was still being perfected.

"Oh yeah," he said. "There's an engineering professor over at U.T. (University of Texas at El Paso) who's been working on the system with Tom. His name's Gary Hawkins. *Doctor* Gary Hawkins. By the time they get through with it, it'll be smaller than a regular carburetor. The other night, Tom had it running perfectly, so he decided to see how fast he could make it go. He got the engine going at the equivalent of about 130 mph, and it blew a seal. Anyway, it really works. Want to see the letters?"

Larry and Victor showed us into the office on the other side of the building. Piled on a desk were two or three hundred envelopes. Some had been addressed to "Tom Ogle—Inventor, El Paso, Texas." Others bore more specific addresses. Most of the envelopes contained personal letters telling Tom not to sell out to the oil companies, to stick with it and be true to himself. Victor said that some of the letters had contained cash or checks made out to Tom.

"He sends those back," Larry added. "He doesn't want anyone thinking they own a piece of the system."

Larry and Victor started to tell stories about Tom. Tom was a fanatic perfectionist, they said. He would often work on his invention for 48 hours without food, water or sleep. He trusted no one and was sure that his invention was going to make him the next Howard Hughes.

"Tom is a genius," said Victor. "All he has to do is listen to an engine and he can tell you everything that's wrong with it. He's especially good with transmissions. If you give Tom the tiniest part, he can tell you what kind of transmission it comes from, what kind of car it was in, the year of the car, everything."

Larry pointed out that he and Victor were just mechanics. The person who really knew all about the system was Tom's older brother, Kurt Ogle. Kurt had constructed the steel frame for the engine and worked with Tom on the development of the device. Kurt could tell me everything I wanted to know.

"But what about Tom?" I said. "I made an appointment with Tom, not his brother."

"Well," said Larry, "Tom just got a new Corvette to go with his Mark V. And Kurt's getting *his* Corvette today or tomorrow. So right now, they've both got 'Vette Fever and they really aren't thinking about much of anything else."

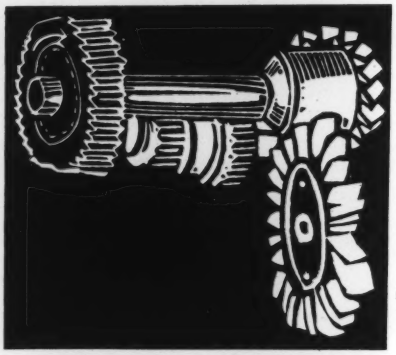
Kurt Ogle arrived at 4:00 p.m. in a souped-up Pontiac Le Mans. He said Tom was having a turbo-charger installed in the new Corvette and that the only way I could possibly meet him was to go to Hobo Joe's, a restaurant in El Paso, at 9:00 the next morning.

"Larry and Victor and I have coffee there every day," said Kurt. "Tom usually stops by, though you never know what time he'll show up. So, any questions you've got about the system, you'd better ask me."

Kurt, Victor, Larry, my wife and I gathered in the office. Kurt told me that Tom had invented the fuel system while working on a lawnmower engine. "He had a garden hose running from the gas tank right into the intake manifold. There was no carburetor—he'd taken that off—just the fumes from the tank being sucked through the hose by the vacuum of the engine. What happened was that the lawnmower ran for 96 hours on less than a gallon. The engine was running on nothing but fumes."

Kurt said the lawnmower incident had occurred six years ago, when Tom was "a teenager." Since then, Tom had developed a series of fuel systems—each one more sophisticated than its predecessor—based on his belief that gas fumes could be fed directly into an intake manifold without the help of a carburetor. At first, Tom had tried to run a hose from the gas tank of a car into the intake manifold of its engine. The engine had run beautifully for a minute; then the vacuum created by the engine sucking fumes out of the gas tank imploded the tank.

"After that," Kurt went on, "Tom built a new tank. He reinforced it so it wouldn't collapse and he ran a coil through it, which he connected to his radiator hose. The radiator water heated up the gas and made fumes, but the whole thing had to be operated by hand. The system we've got now is much better. It can run off any gas tank in any car. A regular fuel pump brings liquid gas up to the system, which sits on top of



your engine, right over the intake manifold. The gas gets squirted into a chamber and hits a screen which breaks it up into tiny drops. The chamber is surrounded by another chamber full of hot air from the exhaust manifold, and *that* chamber's surrounded by a third chamber full of water from the radiator."

I asked Kurt if the three chambers were concentric circles of gas fumes, hot air and water, or if they were more like a triple spiral winding in toward the intake manifold. Kurt hesitated. Then he said, "It's more like a spiral."

"It's like a mouse and a piece of cheese," said Larry suddenly. I saw Kurt give Larry a harsh look, but Larry kept talking. "You know how they put mice through those mazes, don't you? Well, the new system is just like a maze. The gas is the mouse, and the vacuum that the pistons create on their downstrokes is the cheese. The gas starts out at the beginning of the maze in droplets, but by the time it gets to the vacuum—you know, in the cylinders—it's totally vaporized. Tom calls the system 'the fogger' because it makes fog out of gas."

Kurt scowled at Larry. I got the feeling that I had just been told more than I was supposed to hear. Later, as we walked out of the office, Victor took my wife aside. "You should be talking to Tom," he said quietly. "Tom is really a hero. Everyone likes him, and once he starts talking, he can make you believe anything. He's changed a lot since all this happened. He's had his hair curled, he wears a suit all the time, he comes down here and he doesn't want to get dirty so he tells us what to do. But I don't mind it. I'm older than he is, but he's taught me more about cars than I could learn anywhere else. And, you know, I don't know why I'm telling you this but, in a lot of ways, Tom is a lot like Elvis. That's the kind of hero he is."

Hobo Joe's turned out to be a restaurant franchise along the lines of Denny's or Howard Johnson's. My wife and I arrived at 9:00 a.m. We joined Kurt, Larry and Victor in a large booth that looked out at the exit ramp from the nearby freeway. Larry checked the ramp every few minutes for Tom's car.

Kurt was nervous. Today was the day

"If he's really getting 100 mpg, he's destroyed everything man has learned about physics in the last thousand years"

he and Tom were supposed to get the bank loan that Kurt would use to buy his Corvette. Kurt had brought me several magazines and newspapers containing articles about Tom. I skimmed through them and noticed that Tom was born in Germany and that his father had been an electronics engineer named Hans Venor Dinglestadt. Herr Dinglestadt had divorced Tom's mother, Helga, after Kurt and Tom were born, and the boys had been raised by their grandparents. Tom had been his grandmother's favorite, and she had predicted that he would become "the richest man on earth, or the world's greatest rogue." The name Ogle came from Clarence Ogle, Tom's stepfather, an American GI who had married Helga, adopted her children and brought them all to the United States.

Sometime after 11:00 a.m. Larry shouted, "There he is!" and nearly everyone in the restaurant looked out just in time to see Tom's milk-white Mark V cruise into the parking lot.

In a strange, remote way, he *did* look like Elvis. He was chubby, he had the boyish cheeks, and the same aura of bored composure that Elvis might have had walking through a restaurant on his way to a booth.

Tom introduced himself by saying that he couldn't stay for more than a minute as he was already "late for a meeting." I asked him a few questions. His responses were crisp and sparse.

"I'm 25. That's all you need to know. The patent is pending. I don't know when we'll get it. My lawyers hope for three months. The system works. It's nothing new. People have been trying to get better vaporization for years. I just happened to be the one who tried to do it without a carburetor. I removed the carburetor to get better vaporization. Now I've made the carburetor obsolete. But it works. That's all that matters. I don't have to prove anything to anybody. I've already proved it to the only person I have to prove it to."

I assumed that Tom was referring to the wealthy, anonymous investor. I asked him who the investor was. He wrote the name "C. F. Ramsey" and a telephone number on the back of a business card.

"Give him a call," he said.

I asked Tom if there was any chance of seeing the system work. He said this week was a "bad time" for him; it would be better for me to come down in a few months.

"The Ford and Datsun dealerships here in El Paso have donated some cars for test purposes," he said. "We're going to get them outfitted with my system, then we're going to run them through a series of road tests. That's when you should come down. But, if you can be at the shop around 2 o'clock today, we can talk for an hour."

We arrived at the shop at 2:00 p.m. Kurt arrived an hour later in a mint-condition, red 1976 Corvette. He had just picked it up at the dealer's and was too excited to talk. He drove into the garage, opened the hood, removed the carburetor and went to work installing a new, larger carburetor that he had been saving for the occasion. Tom arrived sometime after 4 o'clock in his Mark V. He said he had no time to talk and was late for another meeting. Then he spent 20 minutes working on the El Camino's carburetor, which Victor had been having trouble fixing.

At my insistence, Tom consented to a 15-minute interview. His answers were brief: "I can't guarantee 100 mpg. We'll probably guarantee 300 percent improvement of whatever your car's getting. I don't know how much the system will cost; it could be as high as $300."

Tom spoke at length about only one subject: his plans to construct a huge research and development facility in El Paso with the profits from the system. He said that physicists and engineers would come from all over the world to work in the facility on the development of new energy systems. "And eventually," he admitted, "I would like to build a car—no, a line of cars—called the Oglemobile."

Then he asked me if I wanted to see his Chevelle. "It's got about 1,200 horsepower," he said. "I've put over $10,000 into the engine alone."

We went into a smaller, windowless garage. Kurt came with us, and as soon as Tom climbed into the front seat of the Chevelle, Kurt put his fingers in his ears. I was holding on to my notebook, so I decided to wait until the engine started. After all, I thought, how loud could it be?

The Chevelle was a deep brown color, and its hood had been raised to accomodate two enormous carburetors. I heard Tom turn the key; then the air in the garage exploded. I dropped my notebook and jammed my fingers into my ears, but it was much too late. The walls of the garage were vibrating, my skull was vibrating, and each vibration brought total pain to the inside of my head.

I stepped to one side of the Chevelle and caught sight of Tom. He was looking out at me through the windshield. He had a devilish grin on his face—the roar of the engine evidently had no effect on him—and that was the closest I ever saw him come to actually smiling.

When I got back to California, I made a series of telephone calls. The first call was to an electrical engineer and former General Motors executive who knows as much about automobiles as anyone I have ever met. I asked him what he thought about Tom Ogle.

"All I can resolve," he said, "is that these gimmicks people keep coming up with are always con jobs. I've been approached by all kinds of people who say they've invented the miracle engine. This guy sounds like all the rest of them. I'd listen to him if he said he was getting 20 percent better efficiency, but 300 percent is crazy. He'd melt his engine if he was getting that kind of explosion. If he's right, if he's really getting 100 mpg, he's destroyed everything man has learned about physics in the last thousand years."

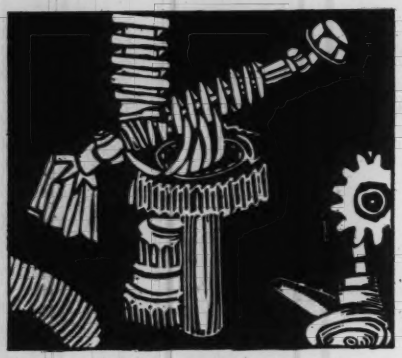
What about the El Paso Datsun and Ford dealerships giving cars to Tom to be used as test vehicles? Didn't that prove something?

"All it proves is that people who own car dealerships don't know anything about cars. What they understand is the same thing this inventor guy understands: how to swindle people. The same thing happened with the Wankel. People lost millions on the Wankel, buying up the rights. Finally, the Japanese got conned into it. By now, Mazda probably wishes the whole thing had never happened."

Then I talked to Robert A. Levy, the El Paso physicist who, as far as I knew, was the only person to have publicly stated that Tom Ogle's fuel system was a hoax. Mr. Levy was very cooperative. He explained in matter-of-fact tones that Tom Ogle and his fuel system were part of an oil company conspiracy to get American drivers to stop conserving gasoline.

"I've proved mathematically that the whole thing is a fraud. One hundred mpg is physically impossible. I challenged Ogle to repeat his 200-mile test. I said he should weigh the car before and after the test. If his system really worked, the difference would be the weight of two gallons of gas. He refused. Then I made him the same challenge and bet him $1,000 he couldn't do it again. He still refused." Mr. Levy promised to mail me copies of his papers and proofs.

My next call was to C. F. Ramsey. The number Tom had given me reached BMC Energy Systems, Inc., of Longview, Washington. A secretary explained that C. F. Ramsey was the president of BMC. I was put in touch with



"When the engine's running, you can stand next to the tailpipe and dry your hair. There's no exhaust. Just hot air"

M. C. "Bill" Terry, BMC's technical engineer. He was polite, straightforward and went out of his way to answer all my questions. He told me that C. F. Ramsey was an international financier with connections to the "largest banking concerns in New York." C. F. Ramsey had been trained by A.P. Giannini, founder of the B of A (Bank of America).

"C. F. spent 31 years in South America," Bill Terry continued. "He industrialized Chile and Peru. C. F. has a sixth sense about this kind of thing. He and I went down there [El Paso] last summer. He asked me, 'Is this for real?' I was a test pilot and I learned to evaluate systems like Tom's. I said, 'It's for real.'

"We signed a preliminary agreement with Tom the next day. J. C. Penney's, Transamerica, GM, Ford, Shell Oil—Shell was the one who offered him that $25 million—they were all down there too. But, in almost every case, they wanted controlling interest in Tom's patent. They wanted to stick Tom off in a laboratory with a bunch of equipment and a staff of Ph.D.s. Well, that would have been the end of Tom Ogle *and* his fuel system. Tom was raised on the streets, he doesn't have a formal education. But he's got a quick mind, he's a mechanical genius, and he wants his *name* on this thing because he's proud of it. C. F. sensed this. He understood that it had to happen through Tom. So, we own no controlling interest in Tom's patent. And we didn't want any, either. But we did not feel that Tom had the sophistication to market this thing on a world-wide level. That's where we're strong. So we said, 'We'll finance your research and development, then we'll take it from you when you reach a certain point and we'll make you rich.

"The next step is for Tom to keep working on the miniaturized system until he's got something he wants us to look at. When we're satisfied that the system is what we want to market, we'll go into production. Tom will get royalties from every unit."

I told Bill Terry that Robert Levy was sending me proof that Tom's claims were mathematically impossible. Bill Terry laughed. "I've seen things that would really boggle Levy's mind," he said. "Tom brought his engine down to 75 rpms while we were there—most engines will die at 600 rpms—and there was no vibration. I saw his spark plug peaks lined up on a scope, and they were so even, I could have laid a ruler across them. His engine runs at about 130 degrees—most cars run at 220. What Tom has is an explosion situation rather than a burning situation. The flame coming out of his exhaust ports is a beautiful blue color. And, whenever you get blue flame, you're getting total explosion of all your fuel.

"Lots of people have asked us why we're risking our money because, let's face it, the system in its present form is rudimentary. But can you imagine how you'd feel if you didn't get into it and it turned out to really work? You'd want to kill yourself."

Two hours after my talk with Bill Terry, Robert Levy called.

"I've decided not to send you the materials," he said. "I'm just not sure of my position—I'm not sure what it's going to be."

I asked Robert Levy if he still felt that Tom Ogle's fuel system was a hoax.

"I never said the system was a hoax," he replied anxiously. "I'm saying the 100 mpg claim is fraudulent."

I called Bill Terry and asked him how he and C. F. Ramsey planned to market Tom's fuel system. He said they might open a chain of installation centers across the country so that all problems of warranting, installing and repairing the device could be handled directly, rather than through another company. Marketing the system through Sears or Penney's Auto Centers would not be feasible—on an exclusive basis, they wouldn't be able to handle the volume. But however the marketing was done, most drivers would be able to afford the device.

"With installation and warranty," he added, "it might go as high as $300 a unit. But we are committed to developing whatever capabilities are necessary to market the device. And we are definitely talking about a world-wide market. C. F. Ramsey has a motto: 'When it rains, everyone should get wet.'"

The safe thing to do at this point would be for me to say nothing more about Tom Ogle and his fuel system. After all, I have no scientific proof that his system works. But the solutions to our technological crises are as likely to come from people outside the scientific community as from people who depend on quantitative analysis for their conclusions.

So, I'm not going to do the safe thing. I'm going to go against the rational grain and draw my conclusions from my lower faculties: instinct, emotion and intuition. If you are someone who relies on reason—if you think instinct, emotion and intuition have no place in worldly analysis—then please, stop reading right here.

I think that sometime during the last six years, a teenage genius living in El Paso invented a device that made miraculous things happen to the engine of his car. He realized that he would eventually have to sell a portion of his control over this device in order to see it manufactured and marketed. He also realized that, because he was poor and because he was very young, people would try to take advantage of him. So, in order to attract the widest selection of bidders and thereby increase his chances of finding someone who would deal with him on a fair, intelligent basis, he made claims about his device that were somewhat exaggerated.

In addition the genius cultivated what he thought was a bankable image. He modeled himself after Elvis Presley and Howard Hughes, and found that the reclusive, mysterious natures of both men suited his own temperament. He enjoyed acting like a hero, so to perpetuate his heroism, he obscured the facts about his device and his background.

The genius' claims, and his remote personality, aroused the interest of the news media. Stories were written, published and broadcast. Interested bidders began to arrive, and with them came more people from the news media—people who probed, who asked too many questions. The genius found himself threatened. He had stretched his credibility in order to advertise his device; now people were paying less attention to his device than they were to his credibility.

At this point, C. F. Ramsey entered the picture. He met the genius, he saw the device, and he sensed that something of incredible value was at hand. Trusting his intuition, C. F. Ramsey purchased the manufacturing and marketing rights to the system, because he knew that if he did not purchase those rights, somebody else would. Then he went back to his other concerns and left the genius in charge of his own dreams, knowing that this was the only way those dreams would ever become realities.

Tom Ogle expects to have the fully miniaturized device installed in his test vehicles by July. ●

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Oedipus Rocks

The fall and rise of Hank Williams Jr.

by John Eskow

Karl Wallenda plunges to his death, and the man beside me booms out "Gawd!" In the slow-motion TV replay, Wallenda's last-second grab for the wire seems to sum up everyone's will to live, in one gesture. Then he falls. It's a horrifying sight, but my host—a tall man in a Stetson and black shades—feels it more deeply than I do: Hank Williams Jr. knows about falls.

We're sitting in his den in backwoods Alabama, where he's unwinding after a grueling tour of California. Like his father before him, Hank is a singer, and even his speaking voice borders on song. He commands a range of Southern vocal tricks, from a playful falsetto crack to a sage-like *basso profundo*, with separate controls for drawl, speed and irony: Each story becomes an aural roller coaster ride. The one he tells now is especially bumpy.

It was August 8, 1975. He'd just recorded a landmark country-rock album, *Hank Williams Jr. & Friends*, that signaled his emergence from his father's shadow. Climbing a Montana mountain with a guide and his son, he stood at the Continental Divide and looked out.

"It takes a while to get up to 9,000 feet. We were lookin' over at Salmon, Idaho, right by a brass stake that marks the Divide. We were on Ajax Peak, which is like a knife edge—you've really got to climb around to get there.

"We're lookin' for mountain goats, way up past the tree line. And finally we started back down, crossin' some pretty rough terrain. And I stepped in the guide's footprint, but it had loosened, and I got caught in a snow slide.

"It was just like fallin' out an airplane—straight down. So down I went, slidin' headfirst on my back. Emotionally, I just froze inside. No feelin'. Just shock. And I thought: You're dead. You're just gonna splatter on the rocks.

"Then, after that thought got out of the way—all this is goin' on within seconds—I flipped over so I was slidin' headfirst on my stomach, and I tried to get that .44 out of my shoulder holster, tried to dig that long barrel into the snow, to try and break the fall. 'Course that was a joke.

"Then I swung my feet down under me as I felt the first little rocks hittin' me, and I decided that the first boulder I hit, I'd just kick out with all my might. Bump, bump, bump, I felt the rocks gettin' bigger, I was bouncin' across 'em. So I drew up my legs and kicked out.

"Dick [the guide] was watchin'; he said it looked like a guy comin' off a ski jump. Then it was a free fall, with me flippin' over. As I'm fallin', I see this huge mountain lake, and I said, 'I'm gonna try and land in that lake.' 'Course that would've killed me right away.

"Finally, I hit that snow like a swan dive. There was a boulder stickin' up through there, and I just hit it straight on, headfirst. It just literally split my face in half. It started right at the top of the hairline, split me right exactly between the eyes, down the left side of the nose—stopped at the chin, although that was broken too . . .

"Came to a rest slumped over in a sittin' position. First thing I done was to look at my hands—you always look at your hands, for some reason—and I couldn't see anything wrong! I thought, hell, I've made it! And I started gettin' my hands up into my head, and I don't have any nose, any teeth—I don't feel any *head*. It's just all a hole, and I'm puttin' my fingers up in it. Just a hole from the lip all the way up, and I'm puttin' my hands inside it . . . grabbin' hold of my brains and all this gobbledygook.

"It's a good thing I was born Gemini 'Cause I'm livin' for more than one man"

John Eskow, who last wrote for New Times *on the Motel on the Mountain, is a member of the rock group Cakewalk.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY COSTA

Nashville bloodline: Hank Sr. performs for his favorite audience

"And Dick gets down there—course there was a lot of snow, retardin' the bleedin'—he starts tearin' my hands away. I'm sayin', 'What is it, what is it?' And he says, 'It's your *nose*, it's your *nose*.' He said it was all he could do to keep from throwin' up. And I saw that he was cryin', and he's a pretty tough old boy.

"Then I jumped up, with this big surge, and I said, 'I'm walkin' out of here, let's get to the Jeep.' Then, of course, the blood came out in torrents, just like turnin' on a water hose, pumpin' out with every heartbeat. And my right eye's hangin' out. And Dick keeps sayin', 'It's your nose . . .' Then I just made two or three steps and piled up. So Dick grabbed all this stuff hangin' out and just shoved it back into place, and it made a terrible sound—all this flesh and bone crunchin' up. Then he tore his shirt off, ripped it up, and wrapped the stuff in place as best he could. No tellin', no way to describe what he seen.

"Now I'm gettin' cold—real cold—so he made a rock enclosure around my head. Now the little boy gets down there, and 'course he's cryin', 'cause he's seen this terrible fall, and he wants to go for help. But Dick just grabs him and shakes him and tells him to just keep me talkin', kick me in the back now and then to get that junk out of my mouth. And Dick goes lookin' for help.

"Now I'm alone with this boy, and he's stunned. That's when the bad period set in, the give-up period, when I just knew that I was dyin'. And I'm lyin' there, lookin' out with one eye at this great scenario, these beautiful snowy mountains—very peaceful, if you weren't in my situation . . . And I thought: This is death.

"And I said to the Lord: I've wanted to die a lot of times. But I wanted it to be *onstage*, or an overdose in a car—you know, some nice *musical* death. Not like this, alone in the snow with a little boy chatterin' on beside me.

"By now he's talkin' a blue streak—his coon dog's the best coon dog in the world, and he's gonna win a prize at the fair, and he loves to go fishin' . . . And I'm thinkin' about my own little boy, and about Becky, and the guys in the band, the bus, my mother, my grandfather—the whole thing . . .

"But then all that's gone, and it's just *here comes death, whatever it is*.

"Now for some reason my eye—the one still in my head—caught sight of these two rings on my hand, the H and W, my initials. And for some reason, seein' those rings made me think I could live. And I started poundin' my hand in the snow, poundin' with every heartbeat. When they finally got to me, I'd dug a crater two feet deep in that snow. Two and a half hours went by that way.

"But now the boy's still ravin' on, and I'm tryin' to answer him—couldn't understand me 'cause of the gook in my throat, but I said, '*I'm not givin' up here, I'm gonna fight this thing*.'

"Now his daddy's at the foot of the mountain. And he yells up to the boy, 'Is he still talkin'?' And I wanted to jump up and holler, 'Hell yes, get up here!' I could see him down there, and he looked like a giant—some muscles in my brain had been strained, affectin' my sight in the eye that was workin', and everybody looked like a giant to me. Dick looked like he could just reach up the mountain and carry me away himself.

"He hollered up, 'The helicopter's coming!' Now he'd found a forest ranger, by pure luck. Otherwise he'd have had to drive to the ranger station, which was 27 miles away.

"Then the medics came, and it was in with the Demerol, in with this and that. Wrapped my head in bandages. And these rescue guys had this cocoon-like stretcher, and they had to carry me.

"And it's hurtin' now. Bad. And then I realize I'm goin' on the *outside* of the chopper, it's a one-man machine. And my cocoon is clamped to the outside. Up goes the helicopter, and I'm right out there in the wind, on the struts. And I'm wonderin' if I'm gonna die in this cocoon hangin' off a helicopter.

"But it didn't take long before we set down on a ranch. They got me right into this Cessna, did some more work on me there, and off we go. We've still got this 100-mile trip to make.

"We land in Missoula, and it's right into another helicopter. This is nearly five hours after the fall. They've got bottles and needles hangin' over me. And we set down on the helicopter pad, and we're inside the hospital.

"I never lost consciousness the whole time. The doctors said that had a lot to do with me livin'.

"And they started cuttin' off my clothes, my shoulder holster, and they went to cut off the cross I wear around my neck. I started yellin', 'No! Don't cut that cross!' And that's the last thing I remember before I went under. And later I had all that stuff—clothes, holster and cross—sewed back together.

"Four doctors operated on me for 7½ hours. And as soon as I woke up in that hospital bed, I thought: *The hard part's over. Now the healin' can begin.*

"There was a boulder stickin' up, and I just hit it straight on, headfirst. It literally split my face in half"

To be born Hank Williams Jr. in 1949 was to be the namesake of a god. His father was—and still is—adored with fervor throughout America. His first hit, "Lovesick Blues," established him as the greatest draw the Grand Ole Opry ever had. Through his songs—"Your Cheatin' Heart," "Jambalaya," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"—he became the down-home poet of hell-raising and grief. Add a death at 29 from speed and

PHOTOGRAPH BY HENRY SCHOFIELD

alcohol, and you have all the ingredients for an instant myth.

The last few years of his life were a boozy fog, marked by a divorce from his wife, Audrey. Although still idolized, he was increasingly tormented by the forces that shaped his lyrics. His one sustaining joy was Hank Jr., who was three years old the night his father died in the back seat of a new '52 Cadillac.

When asked what he remembers of Hank Sr., the son at first responds with a brusque "Nothing." Then he ponders the question for 30 seconds. "Wait—just a snapshot image in an airplane, once. And backstage at the Opry—I knocked something over . . ."

But if his memories are vague, there were always thousands of people to fill him in. The Hank Williams legacy was his, whether he wanted it or not.

He was raised on the belief that loneliness was in his bloodline, along with music and alcohol. As if the "lovesick blues," like black lung, was a disease linking the generations.

When he was eight years old, he was thrust into a career as a professional specter, playing his father's songs for crowds of necromantic drunks. Red Foley, the Opry star, would sit backstage with the child and tell him: "You're a ghost, son, nothin' but a ghost of your daddy." His mother would hold him close and say virtually the same thing.

For months at a stretch he would tour the honky-tonk circuit, rooming with legendary wild men like Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis. He'd watch Cash stuff cherry bombs down motel toilets and rig booby traps for the maids; he'd serve as mascot for troops of stoned musicians; and he'd steal every show because his name was Hank Williams.

Then he'd go home for a while and sit in class with the other third graders.

"It was a *bit* schizophrenic," he says with a wry smile. "At first, I thought bein' Hank's boy was the greatest thing in the world—a ghost of this man that everyone loved. They think I'm daddy—how wonderful. Mother's smilin', she's happy, money's rollin' in, manager's happy—seemed ideal. Then, round about my teens, it all hit me at once."

One can only try to imagine how adolescence hit Hank Williams Jr. When he was 16, he had a number-one record on the C&W charts—"Standing in the Shadows," a recitation set to music. MGM, his record company at the time, had him overdub his voice onto Hank Sr.'s songs, and released two albums that featured a living teenager harmonizing with his dead father.

A heavy drinker since his mid-teens, he embarked on a nonstop bender through his early 20s.

"It was the whole country-music syndrome. I got to where I didn't have any more hangovers—woke up drunk, went to sleep drunk." During this period he also co-starred in a movie, *A Time to Sing*, with Ed Begley, did the soundtracks for several other films, and married for a second time.

He was rich, sweet-faced and an idol by proxy. But in addition to his Jack Daniel's habit, he'd become addicted to Darvon. He seemed bent on replaying his father's melodrama—live hard, die young and be played by George Hamilton in a cheesy film biography. (The movie, *Your Cheatin' Heart*, has grossed millions over the years; Hank Jr. did the soundtrack.) With a myth for a father, and a classic stage mother, he was caught in a Freudian squeeze play.

In 1973 he snapped. "Booze, sleeplessness, pills, depression, it just got to be too much." Just as his father had done 20 years before, he began missing gigs, acting crazy, inching closer to ruin.

"I was still havin' to do shows as daddy. I'd sit home listenin' to Chuck Berry and Fats Domino, thinkin' of musical concepts myself, but I'd still have to play those lonesome songs of Hank's—and they were hittin' pretty close to home. Marriage bustin' up—I was supposed to be this big success, but where were the friends? Where were the lovers? I guess it all ganged up on me. So I tried the check-out route."

In a 1974 song, "Getting Over You," he describes his attempted suicide: "I got some pills from an old doctor friend;/The bottle said one every twelve hours for the pain./You know this pain I feel ain't small,/That's why I took them one and all./It was something I had to do/To get over you."* (To get over whom? He says it's addressed to his first wife, but the lyric makes sense as a message to his father, too. In any case, friends got his stomach pumped in time.)

After his suicide attempt, he sought help from a Nashville psychiatrist, not an easy step for a man trained in macho loneliness.

"Well, I'd been huntin' with him, so I trusted him as a man. And it was pretty much life-or-death at that point."

The psychiatrist diagrammed a dead-

**Copyright © 1974 by Hank Williams Jr. Music, Inc. Used by permission.*

Hank at 18: "No more hangovers—woke up drunk, went to sleep drunk"

PHOTOGRAPH/FRED ROSE MUSIC, INC.

ly triangle that had kept Williams trapped and depressed: his mother, widely described as a hard-drinking, haunted woman who exploited her son; his manager, who resisted Hank's creative impulses; and the city of Nashville. All conspired to keep him a ghost.

"The doctor said, 'You'd best get the hell out of this town. Ain't no good times for you here.' So I did—moved down to Cullman, Alabama. Started havin' some fun. Realizin' that self-pity is bullcrap.

"As soon as I woke up in that hospital bed I thought, the hard part's over. Now the healin' can begin"

"Pain is somethin' you get to leanin' on. I fell into that trap of thinkin' I had to suffer to create. Finally I realized: Hell, I don't need it *that* bad. No matter how good the songs that might come of it, *nothin's* worth that kind of pain."

After listening to numerous writers who treasure their hard-earned *angst* above all else, and who constantly quote the old Rilke saw, "I don't want to exorcise my demons, for my angels might leave too," it's a pleasure to hear the cult of despair ridiculed—especially by a writer as gifted as Hank Williams Jr.

"Hank is as fine a songwriter as you'll find in country music today," says Michael Bane, editor of *Country Music* magazine. "Like Willie Nelson—his only equal—he's got that intuitive poetry that makes you think, I've *been* there, and it happened *that way*."

That poetry comes from a struggle—to carve a selfhood from a block of legend, to deal with pain without self-pity.

"Look at some of these rock stars, throwin' TVs outta windows to show how *artistic* they are," Hank snorts. "It's the difference between *actin'* crazy for publicity, and *bein'* crazy 'cause you just can't help it. Well, I figure I've put in my time. Let somebody else sing the blues."

Friday night. A redneck civil war rages in the Palomino, L.A.'s country-music venue. Roughly half the patrons are bouffant-and-sagging-jowls types who've come to hear a seance, a slavish evocation of Hank Williams Sr.; the other half are spaced cowboys who want Hank Jr., rock, blues and all. The schism widens as the band moves into a signature tune of Hank Sr.'s, "You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)."

It's the old lyric, all right—a typically Williams mix of plaint and whimsy—but it's done in a grinding, Chicago blues adaptation that strikes a bouffant next to me as sheer heresy.

"Shoot, he's got it all niggered up," she whispers in disgust to her husband. Meanwhile, the cowboys are stomping and yipping their approval.

Hank's voice is a wonder—it hits a high, keening note and holds it for eight bars, then nose-dives into a cavernous bass without hesitation. As a pure instrument, his voice far surpasses his father's; few white singers can compete with him. (One voice teacher has compared his singing to opera star Luciano Pavarotti's.)

He does Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama" as a tribute to several of that band's members who died in a recent plane crash. It's a fittingly rowdy eulogy, with Hank ad-libbing and the band rocking out.

Hank sings with his head tilted back, sunglasses dazzled by the baby spotlights; he looks, and sings, like a blind man. (Since the accident he's worn a Stetson to hide a dented forehead, and shades to hide eyes that don't match.)

Mayday, mayday—there's danger at a table right in front of the bandstand. Two drunken couples are passing their multicolored drinks around like joints, with predictably bad results. They're alternately shaking with the music and slumping in their chairs, fixing Hank with the hopeless fish-eye stare of the truly wasted.

As he finishes "Stoned at the Jukebox," a great outlaw anthem from the *Friends* album, one of the women springs back to life. "Hank!" she screams. "Play 'Cheatin' Heart' for Hank and Audrey!" With this, she digs a crumpled twenty from her purse and flings it onstage. Hank ignores it, but more bills come sailing up from the crowd, many with requests scribbled on them. Napkins inky with requests fly onstage. *People* with requests fly onstage.

"Gawd, I hate that shit," Hank says later. "Sometimes I kick the damn bills off the stage, hopin' to head it off. And sometimes I just stop and lecture 'em. I say, 'Look. At one point in my life I was programmed to be my daddy. But my daddy's career is doin' pretty good, so how 'bout lettin' me work on my own?' If that don't work, there's usually a few cowboys in the crowd to make the loudmouths shut up."

This time, however, he responds to the shower of twenties with poetry—his most poignant song, "Living Proof."

I'm gonna quit singin' all those sad songs,
'Cause I can't stand the pain—
Oh, the life I sing about now
And the one I live is the same.
When I sing them old songs of Daddy's,
Seems like ev'ry one comes true.
Lord, please help me, do I have to be
The living proof.

His voice, rich and sonorous, coaxes extra syllables from "living" and "proof," drawing more rebel cries from the aficionados. The bouffant next to me pouts in silence.

Why, just the other night after the show
An old drunk came up to me.
He says, "You ain't as good as your daddy, boy,
And you never will be."
Then a young girl in old blue jeans
Says, "I'm your biggest fan";
It's a good thing I was born Gemini
*'Cause I'm livin' for more than one man.**

When he reaches the last line, both factions—his father's and his—suddenly roar in unison.

Hank Williams, also known as Luke the Drifter and Old Lovesick, fathered Hank Williams Jr., aka Luke the Drifter Jr. and Bocephus.

As far as Hank Jr. can remember, "Bocephus" was the name of a hillbilly comedian's puppet in the Grand Ole Opry. In 1951 and 1952, during Williams' greatest stardom, little Hank would sometimes watch the wild shows at Ryman Auditorium. He was entranced by the dummy. So his father, having already named him after himself, renamed him after a puppet.

It's best to cast a wary eye on symbols when you're dealing with real people's lives. Bocephus might also be, Hank Jr. says, "just some silly hillbilly name."

Now the band's warming up the crowd, beginning the second set. Chris Plunkett, the bass player, sings a country-rock call-to-arms, "The South's Gonna Do It." He sings it with deep conviction, and the crowd hoots him on, never suspecting that this drawling Johnny Reb is a jazz composer from Asbury Park, New Jersey.

After three songs they introduce Hank. Back onstage, fighting a high fever and flu, he starts out ferocious. He's got that hell-raising mania that punk bands counterfeit, a roadhouse urgency that precludes slickness.

It's so easy to milk pathos in C&W bars—all it takes is a few songs that Hank describes as the "my-darlin'-left-me-so-I-got-drunk-drove-home-and-ran-over-someone's-little-girl" kind. For the most part, he resists this temptation, going after ecstasy instead. He seems to want to squeeze his whole body through the microphone, into some wilder land. Sometimes his lip, permanently numb from the fall, actually curls around the mike, and he has to pull his face away.

And sometimes he falters. Never scrupulous about tuning his guitar, he's capable of playing an entire song in the key of X, loud. And when his energy

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sags, the act deflates instantly, as it does now in mid-set. Three or four tunes drone by in a stupor. Hank's major problem as a performer is also his strength: Like all instinctive artists, he leads with his subconscious. But in an era when music is market-tested, shrink-wrapped and sold like deodorant, a few dull stretches and discordant notes seem a small price for authenticity.

By the end of the set, he's got his grin and *élan* back in place, and he's singing with the power of a Ray Charles, rocking through "Jambalaya"—"Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou." The band rips into the last descending chords, and Hank's already moving through the crowd as the ovation begins.

A would-be groupie jumps up and grabs her idol in a half-nelson.

"Ah'm gawna put somethin' on yew *alcohol* cain't rub off!" she wails. Hank staggers a few steps with this doped-up albatross around his neck, then gestures to Albert, his road manager. It takes all of Albert's considerable strength to pry her loose.

At the front table, the drunken foursome is still yelling for "Your Cheatin' Heart," even though the band's already packing up and scanning the floor for loose waitresses.

Welcome to the Motel California: Howard Johnson's in North Hollywood. In a working year, Hank spends 150 to 200 nights in motels like this—a toilet on perpetual flush, Art Drecko lamps with switches hidden in unlikely places, elevators where the air is so denatured that it's like riding in a giant menthol filter.

We meet first on neutral turf, his manager's room. Becky, his wife of a year, and several associates are there to run interference: After 25 years of being grilled about his father, he's initially nervous at interviews.

"Say Jawn," says J.R. Smith, his manager, "y'all bein' a writer, y'all must know this Paul Schrader fella?"

Schrader, who wrote *Taxi Driver* and directed *Blue Collar*, has conferred with Hank Jr. about doing a new film biography of his father.

"That'd be a *real* good lick," says Hank. His enthusiasm is understandable: How would you like to remember your father as played by George Hamilton?

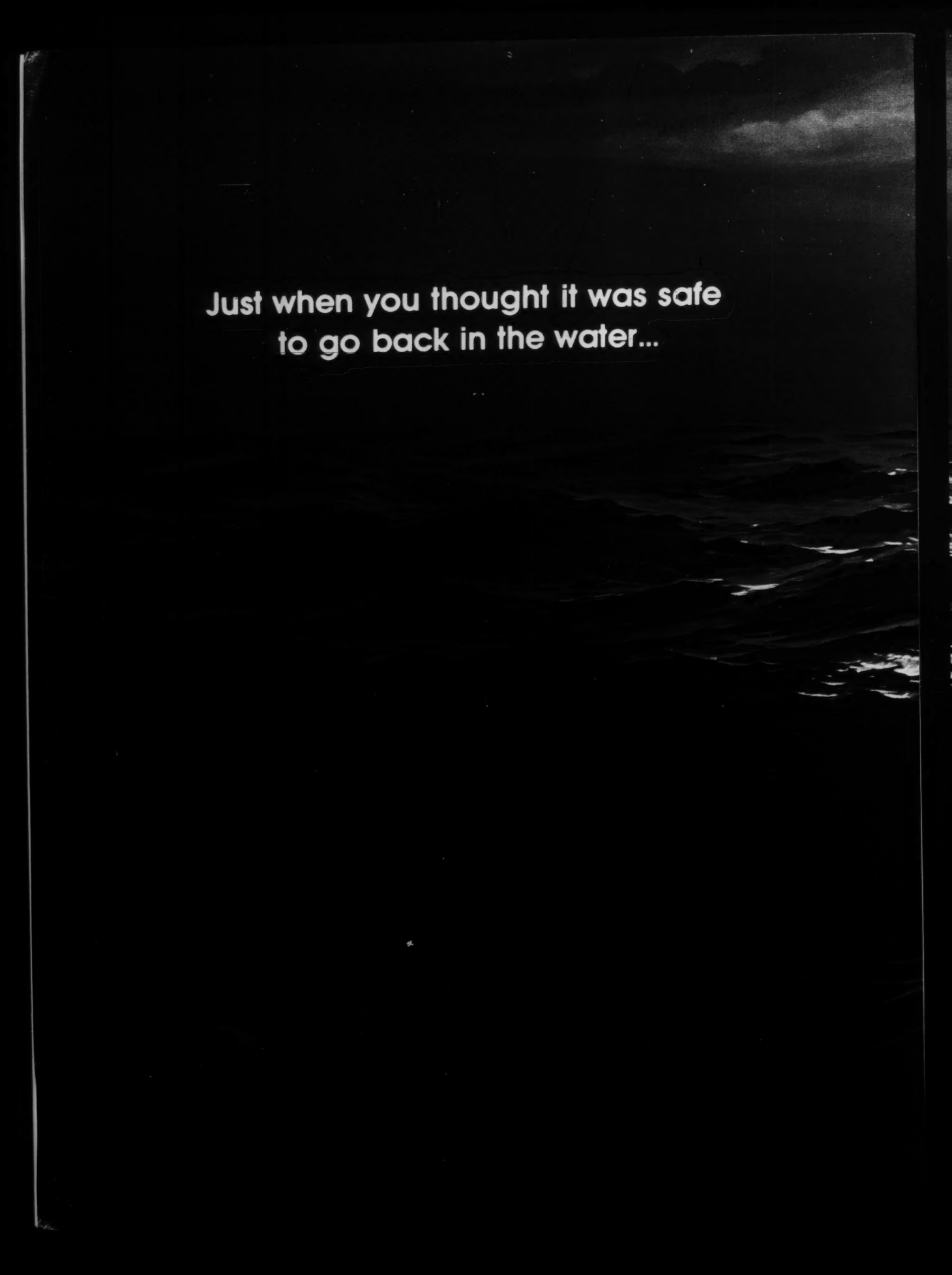
Without seeking it, we're into the father-son question. "See, the record companies tell me I'm writin' too *personal* when I talk about my relation to daddy," he says. "But every town we play at, some young person comes up and says, 'I had the same routine with my father.' So it seems like it's pretty universal."

Outside, the blond canyons look down at the sea. Hank's wearing his gray high-rise Stetson and denim, a

Honky-tonk Hank: "Gettin' some feedback from these wires in my head"

After the fall: "Gawd, that felt good, to wear blue jeans!"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TONY COSTA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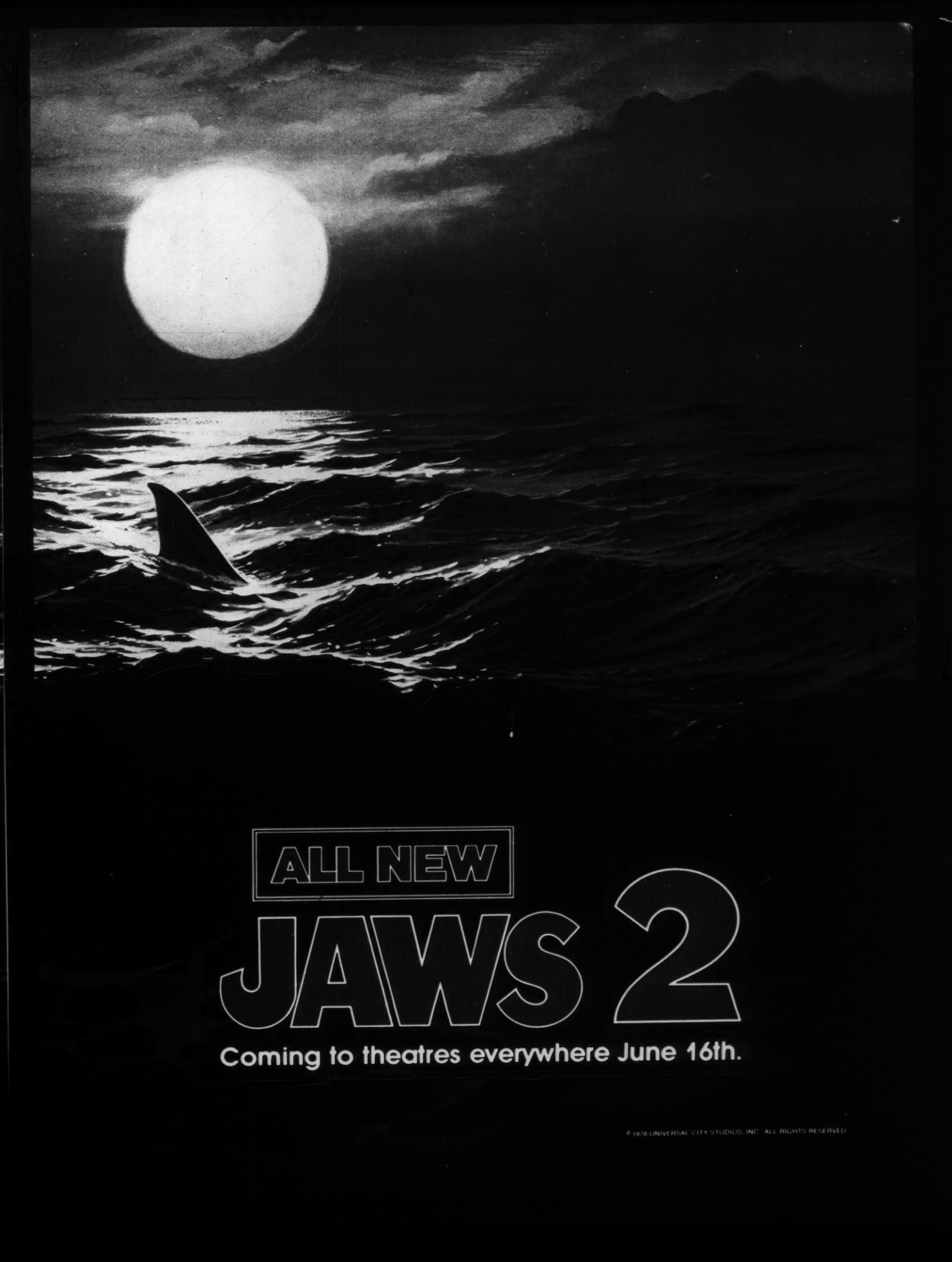

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Why wait for Christmas?

12 YEARS OLD WORLDWIDE • BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY • 86 PROOF • GENERAL WINE & SPIRITS CO., NEW YORK, N.Y.

Hollywood's Halston: Hank takes time out from his shopping spree to jam with Nudie

cowboy in a long black limo, cruising L.A. The sun glints off the diamond clef above the hat brim, gleams on the ever-present shades.

We're headed for Nudie's, the Paris of redneck couture, the Hollywood shop that's draped rhinestones around everyone from Elvis Presley to Elton John, by way of Dolly Parton. Albert and Becky shift uneasily as we approach—Hank's been known to buy outfits he doesn't need at Nudie's, and they're wondering what new extravagance he's got planned.

(One point about Hank Williams Sr.: In addition to the long shadow he left for his son, he also left Hank Jr. a share of his royalties—something like $250,000 a year.)

Nudie himself greets Hank at the door. Nudie, at 75, is American weirdness at its zenith—both larger than life, and smaller. A wizened Brooklyn-born Jew in a Stetson of his own, wearing one black cowboy boot and one yellow one, he clearly revels in the role of Crusty Old Bastard.

He greets Hank like a beloved nephew, which, in a sense, he is. Hank Sr. was a close friend of Nudie's, and bought all his outfits at the shop; his skeleton now reposes in a Nudie burial suit. Nudie remembers "little Hank" from his crib days.

"I made that boy his first rhinestone suit when he was two," he says, ordering an employee to dig up a photo. "Yes sir . . . they used to send his daddy out to me for drying out. Sometimes we'd just both get wet."

Among the 2,800 photos on Nudie's walls, a somber oil painting of Old Lovesick occupies a prized space. Nudie sits down facing it and takes an ancient mandolin out of its case. Hank sits under his father's lean face and takes the guitar someone offers him.

There's mandolin talk and reminiscing as they tune up. Nudie starts to play an old hill ballad, "Ramona," a haunting air with its Scotch-English roots still audible. Nudie plays his mandolin—two centuries old—with great tenderness and very little skill, and sketches the melody with a timeworn voice.

Next they drift into "Blue Dream," another mountain lament; a dozen customers gather around. Nudie's an old man recalling a woman and a river, recalling much that is gone, and the eyes of a matron across the room begin to fill with tears.

"Darling," Nudie recites, "I can still feel your kiss on my lips . . . won't you come back? Won't you, just once? You won't? Then FUCK YOU, YOU LOW-DOWN BITCH!"

The timing is George Burns/Julius Erving perfect, the jump from heartbreak to profanity made in one nimble move. Our laughter is sudden and uncontrolled: Nudie's just placed the two crucial elements of country music, mourning and outrage, face to face.

Hank, who rarely wears anything more gaudy than Levi's, is suddenly enchanted by a jumpsuit—skintight and spangled with purple butterflies—that Elvis Presley ordered just before his death. As Becky and Albert exchange helpless glances, he goes to try it on.

Alone with Nudie in a corner of the store, I ask him about Bocephus.

"I've known that boy all his life. He's a helluva man, a helluva singer, and let me tell you something from the bottom of my heart—I seen him gettin' laid when he was *seven years old*!"

(Later, when I read the quote to Hank, he roars and shakes his head. "Naw," he smiles. "I was eight.")

Hank comes back, decked out in butterflies. He buys the suit for $1,200—only, it seems, because of its connection to Elvis. (Five days later he decides he doesn't really want it, and has it shipped back to Nudie.)

After visiting a few guitar shops, we return to Nudie's for a photo session on the roof. Hank's mood, dampened by flu and medication, has been slowly warming as we drive.

His size and manner and history conspire to make you forget his age. Until now, he's shown no sign of being 28, but clowning on the roof, with the L.A. skyline behind him, he becomes a young man.

"Hello," he intones, in a perfect imitation of Lorne Greene on *Bonanza*, "this is the Ponderosa, and these are my people . . . some of 'em are a little *weird*, but they're all I've got. This here's my horse Fag . . ."

Once he gets started on Wild West shtick he reveals a little-boy side. He's a passionate fan of Yosemite Sam, the Mel Blanc cartoon sheriff. He even got Blanc to record the message on his phone-answering device—"All raht, you ornery varmint, leave yer name 'n' number or ah'll plug ya fulla holes, ya big galoot!"

Hank's sense of humor is a hybrid—sometimes it's backwoods mock-dumb ("They're gonna have another drought in L.A., 'cause all this rain's washed the

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY COSTA

Hank and Becky on the road: They haven't got time for the pain

water away"), and sometimes it's downright black. (At one point at the Palomino, when his amplifier began to squeal, he said, "Sorry, I'm gettin' some feedback from these wires in my head.")

But the humor vanishes as quickly as it appears, as Hank stares down at Los Angeles.

"Gawd," he sighs. "Sometimes it seems I've been on the road forever."

It's Saturday night at the honky-tonk, with all that that implies. A 300-pound behemoth in worsted picks a fight with a scrawny longhair, a tattoo artist covered with his own handiwork chats with a woman in leather, John ("Gentle on My Mind") Hartford is called onstage to play a remarkable solo on his face.

"*Git rowdy*," someone hoots, as someone always will. This is the Temperament Exchange: For the price of a draft you buy the rights to a stranger's psychosis, or a night's feigned intimacy . . . GIT ROWDY! IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT, GODDAMMIT!

Becky Williams, with her seraphic face and calm intelligence, is probably the least rowdy person in the place. She talks in a Louisiana accent thick as gumbo, with that lilting question mark at the end of each sentence.

"I first met Hank just a week before his fall. Next thing I knew he'd fallen off that mountain, and they told me he'd never look the same again. Only thing that worried me was that, with the plastic surgery, his face might not seem . . . real. But it did. And he seemed like the same person, too."

In C&W circles, of course, the "goodhearted woman" is the traditional Rx for the blues. Becky Williams is certainly that, but she's quite a bit more. She graduated from Louisiana State University with a major in music, and she's one of the few people who can read serious novels in crowded motel rooms.

"I'm damn lucky to have that woman," Hank says when she's out of earshot. "She stood by me and never flinched a bit. Not only that, she's a pretty good hunter. We can share things . . . I looked at her in the hospital one day, and I thought: If it's this good through the bad times, think what the good times will be like. And let me tell you, they've been *good*."

By now the Palomino crowd is screaming for him. Tonight there are fewer death-cultists in the audience, a few more true fans. It's a war of attrition, but it's slowly being won.

"They'd forgotten there was a mirror in that bathroom. I looked, and it was... *bad*"

"Ladies and gentlemen, let's hear it for the one and only BOCEPHUS . . . MR. HANK WILLIAMS JR.!"

"I woke up the next evenin' in intensive care, and my jaws were wired shut. 'Course there were no teeth. I'm runnin' my tongue around, feelin' nothin' but brass wires. Tubes down the throat, the whole bit. I rolled my eye around and looked around: Everything was so lily-white in the room, and I saw the mountains out the window covered with snow, and then I was out again.

"They said, 'If he makes it eight days, he'll live.' But they didn't expect me to. They figured my brain had to be infected, from me touchin' it and the wind cuttin' through it.

"And my head's a basketball, all shaved too, with stitches and wires all over it. But I couldn't see myself.

"Next morning I asked the nurse, 'Is this my nose?' And she said yes. I said, 'Are you *sure* it's not a plastic nose?' And she said no. See, it was just flapped over there, like you took a flap of cloth and peeled it away, and they just hooked it back in there. So it *was* my nose.

"Then I started noticin' the sounds—everything was too loud! The blips on the oscilloscope were like hammer blows! They were soothin', for what they meant, but too loud.

"But now I'm gettin' better, better, takin' liquid through a straw, but the pain is gettin' worse, so I'm takin' a lot of Demerol, too.

"Then I caught myself callin' for Demerol when I didn't need it. Johnny Cash was in my room, and he'd been through his pill thing, and he said: 'Hoss, don't let me catch you buzzin' for that Demerol when you don't need it—'cause it's *real good*, ain't it?' And I said, '*Uh huh!*' But I remembered that, and I caught myself.

"On the eighth day they gave me a whirlpool bath, and that was the most fantastic sensation you can imagine. By now I could take little steps on my own, and I had to go to the bathroom, so they let me go myself.

"Well, they'd forgotten there was a mirror in that bathroom. I looked in that mirror and it was . . . *bad*. Much worse than I'd expected. Just this tremendous, swollen head, a monster's head—one eye screwed way off to the side, like an involuntary thing, the other eye black, jaws wired together, no teeth—it's got a grotesque look to it. There's a hole in my forehead where the bone's sunken in, and you can see the heartbeat pulsin' in my forehead. Terrible green and blue colors, stitches down the middle of the face, unbelievable weight loss, bony limbs, ribs stickin' through flesh. Muscles gone. That was a downer. I figured I'd get some Frankenstein roles. Or some leftover Jack Elam parts.

"That's when I resolved myself that music was over. I thought, hell, there's no way to get past this stuff! And I'd told God many times I didn't want to sing, so this looked like the deal goin' down that way. I went into a rejection period.

"Next day they brought a guitar down there, into the rehabilitation unit. I knew I could move my hands, but . . . it was a pretty quiet moment. Then I started, real slow at first, and soon I was rollin' along! Then it almost turned into Request Time. Cash was there, and he'd sing a song and I'd tinkle along. And that was a rush.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY COSTA

"Better and better and better. So I asked 'em if I could hunt in October, which was two months later. They said, 'No, you'll be here at least six weeks.' Fifteen days later I left.

"Dick's wife, Betty, said, 'You've been left here for some purpose.' It seemed that way. Shuffled outta that hospital and up to Dick's house. Stayed there for a month, readin' every Indian book I could find. Bought a guitar and started playin'. Bought a big hat to cover the hole in my skull, sunglasses to cover my eyes. And blue jeans—Gawd, that felt good, to wear blue jeans!

"I'm still wired together. Couldn't see too good, but I'd watch the Yosemite Sam cartoons at 3:30. Progressin' along.

"Then I had to go back to Missoula to get the wires out. Doctor sat me down in a chair and said, 'Hold on, this is gonna hurt a little bit.' By now they'd given me so much pain killer they couldn't give me any more, so it had to be done without it. And he said, 'This wire is coming from just behind your eyeball,' and he got hold of it and just yanked it clean out through my jaw. And it hurt, all right. 'Cause it was wire through bone.

"Then he took the other one out. Well, my jaws have been wired for a month. So when we got back to Dick's house I had Betty make me up the most beautiful tuna fish sandwich. And I took this big bite, so excited to be eatin' again—and there was nothin' but a wet circle on the bread where I'd bitten. See, all the muscles were gone. Freaky. So I threw the damn sandwich and bounced it off the wall.

"Well, I could eat, but not that stuff. So Betty started makin' spaghetti, casseroles, stuff like that. Man, I was *really* doin' good then! I eat a lot anyway, and I thought: This is great!

"Also, I could start to sing now. Plus I took my .45, to see if I could sight with one eye, and I hit the damn bull's-eye first time. That really turned me on.

"Left Montana in October with my big Alabama hat pulled down low. Got home, started drivin' the pickup, shootin', feelin' good. Then the doctor told me the jaw was healin' wrong. Swung over to the left. This was two weeks after I'd started eatin', and he said they'd have to wire the whole thing over.

"Now this was a bummer.

"Back to the hospital, back on the table, pop, pop, break the jaws, again. Take a knife and cut the gum away. Bring it over there, line it up right, I'm wired up again. And they worked on the nose—the nose is headin' east, lookin' pretty bad.

"Come back to Cullman, wired up. Went huntin' that season, like they said I wouldn't do, killed a deer. Go back to Nashville and they yank the wires out again. Nose is better, eyes a little better.

"Mother died right about then, and at the funeral I guess I looked a little weird. The papers said, 'Williams looks like death himself.' Big funeral—George Wallace came down, a bunch of other folks. All the black people linin' the streets, and white people, heads bowed. It was a rough time.

"Then oral surgery, takin' metal out of the roof of my mouth. Then we need a forehead plate to get the brain covered better, 'cause it's just skin still, no bone. This was March. April we started playin' shows again.

"Got this funny toupee on my head, along with the hat and glasses.

"Then we had to go to this eye doctor, get the orbit of this eye built up. We get it done, leave the hospital, the eye looks a little bit funny.

"We go down to Becky's folks' house for Thanksgiving. And we're sittin' around the table and everybody's givin' me some mighty strange looks. So I go into the bathroom—somethin's come loose, and this whole implant has rotated up, and this eyeball is stickin' out—it's red, it's blue, it's terrible, it's runnin'. Had to go back for another implant.

"See, all these operations—you're lookin' forward to each one. Each one's a step. Each one moves you forward . . ."

The "den" is generally a dumb name for a room with a TV, recliner and Parcheesi set. Williams' den, however, houses a grizzly, a timber wolf, an owl and a bobcat—all stuffed, of course, but

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so artfully that they seem to be sizing each other up.

We're sitting in the midst of this silent animal face-off, drinking Jack Daniel's and watching the news. But Wallenda's death has spooked Hank a little, and he's itchy to move downstairs, to the shop where he works on his guns.

Guns have been a lifelong passion for him. He owns several hundred, including many rare models, and he is an expert hunter and gunsmith.

"Hank's got that intuitive poetry that makes you think, I've been there and it happened *that way*"

Today he's retooling the grip on Becky's .45, adjusting the trigger alignment, doing it all by feel. As I watch him work, his 6'1" frame bent over a table, he looks like a medieval craftsman.

When he's finished with Becky's gun, he suddenly decides it's time I fired some "real weapons." He ponders the choices, then reaches behind a loose ceiling panel for a long khaki bag. Slipping on a pair of ear protectors, he motions for me to follow him outside.

The Alabama woods are quiet in the twilight, but you can see firing lanes set among the trees—rows of stumps honeycombed by shots, spent cartridges, massacred tin cans. As we stand before the widest lane, Hank unzips the khaki bag and takes out . . . a machine gun.

"Listen, Hank—is a *machine gun* a good thing to start on?"

"Gawd, yes. It's like in the movies."

And he's right. It's crazy—the trigger senses every vague impulse to fire, and you're barely conscious of your finger's intervention. I'm wounding the cans and stumps at random, amazed by the ease of it all.

"Now hold 'er sideways and spray it," he says, and, as in the movies, it happens. The weapon trembles as bullets dig a trench in dry earth.

"Kind of a rush, ain't it?" Hank grins.

It's a rush all right. Machine guns are hooked so well into the subconscious—you could wipe out a whole family as an afterthought.

But that's a city kid's rush. There's no homicidal edge to Hank's love of guns; he doesn't have enough hatred for that.

Hank Williams Sr. was known, in freaky moments, to ventilate motel rooms with gunfire; but just as Hank Jr.'s learned to control his melancholy better than his father did, he's also more circumspect about when and where he shoots. And he always keeps the first chamber unloaded, just in case.

After shooting, we stroll around to see his dogs and smell the spring air at dusk. Tennessee is the last green hill on the horizon. Silence grows around the house in abundance, like a crop, as darkness falls.

When it's time to leave, he offers the use of his pickup truck and a bottle of Jack Daniel's—we're in a dry county. Driving through nighttime Alabama that way, I feel, surprisingly, half at home.

Hank Williams is often called the "father of modern Nashville": It's true economically as well as spiritually. Although his own style was relentlessly down-home, he was the first country songwriter to have his work "covered" by many pop artists. Tony Bennett, Polly Bergen and Andy Williams all scored early successes with saccharine versions of Hank Williams songs, and the blend—earthy sentiment and windy string arrangements—made Nashville rich.

So when Hank Jr. finally left Nashville in 1975, he was leaving the house of his father, perhaps for the first time.

Now the plates on Hank's beige Fleetwood read Alabama Governor's Staff—he's an honorary deputy of the state, a post he takes fairly seriously. Considering he also extols dope-smoking and drinking in a dry county, an observer from the North sees a paradox.

It won't be resolved. Hank has no discernible politics beyond a love for his birthplace and an allegiance to his pleasures. He loves black music—but what musician doesn't? The closest thing to political awareness in Hank is a populist streak that you can also find in characters as disparate as George Wallace and Thomas Paine.

On my last day in Alabama, Hank visits the dentist. One of his false teeth is too sharp and must be filed down. When he's finished in the chair, the dentist comes out into the foyer with him, beaming.

"It's on the house," he says, clapping Hank on the back.

"Hey," says Hank, unsmiling, "I'll tell all my friends to come up here. Free dentistry."

"Just for you," the dentist laughs nervously.

Outside, Hank is fuming. "*On the house* . . . Gawd, next thing some poor bastard'll walk in there in agony and he'll charge him $35 just to look. Gawd, I hate that shit."

For politics, that will have to do.

Williams' home is 140 miles south of Montgomery, where his father lies buried. A ritual visit to Hank Sr.'s grave is the C&W equivalent of communing with Keats at his graveside in Rome—hundreds of songs have been written about it. Hank Jr. sings the best of them, "Montgomery in the Rain," written by Steve Young. "I'm gonna go out to Hank's tombstone, and cry up a thunderstorm chain . . ."

Hank adds a chilling line at the end of Young's song: "You all know me well by the songs on the cemetery wind . . ." And he pronounces it "*winnnnnd*," so it whistles through the room. When he sings it, you're not sure if you're hearing a voice from the grave, from a living son, or from some ghastly fusion of the two.

"The pure products of America go crazy," said William Carlos Williams. If that's true, we might be grateful that nothing is pure anymore. Hank Williams' voice mapped out an America of unyielding farms and open skies, bad luck and long railroad trains; and his son was supposed to live in it. But it was a smaller America, without Motown bass lines and Eric Clapton guitar licks, and to keep a child/man there was to freeze him in time. So Hank Jr.'s story has been a long catching-up, a fight to be his own contemporary.

It's been a story rife with purity and craziness. Pain alternates with gross comedy—at his mother's funeral, Bob Harrington, the "Bourbon Street Preacher," stood over the open coffin singing "Hey, Good Lookin'" to the deceased. Blood ties loosened and tightened—a Southern gothic sense of predetermination—and at the center, one human, who somewhere found the sanity to say, "I don't want to be a legend, I just want to be a man . . ."

As a kid, he was subject to a terrifying force: indiscriminate love. Sometimes he'd try desperately to alienate a crowd, only to find they still "loved" him. Loved his chromosomes. Loved the fact that his father died young.

As a man, then, he seeks respect for what he does. This has seriously hurt his career. These days, he plays far too many junior-high gyms and roadhouses, when with a little honing of his act and a change in focus he could be packing showcase rooms in New York and L.A. Sales of his latest album, *The New South*, have been somewhat disappointing; as the country proverb has it, he's hiding in plain sight.

It's frustrating, of course, for those who admire him, but at base he just doesn't care that much. Having been packaged since infancy, he won't be packaged again. So he indulges himself, sloughing off the demands of the commercial world. He rejects the blind love that most singers court.

But he knows what *he* loves: music, Becky, food, guns, solitude, pickup trucks. When asked what got him through the fall and the months of recuperation, he said: "I had just learned how to relax, to enjoy life. And I thought: *I want more of this.*" ●

Artistry in Motion

"Look!" says Dorothy to her companions, as they rise from their sleep in the poppy fields. "Emerald City is closer and prettier than ever!" She was right: MGM's Emerald City was closer and prettier than any child's imagination could make it. The red of the poppies, the green of the city, the yellow of the famous brick road—all are indelibly painted on our collective unconscious. But who were the technical wizards responsible for this moving-picture-book Oz? It was the work of some little-known artisans—Cedric Gibbons, Jack Martin Smith, William Horning—called art directors.

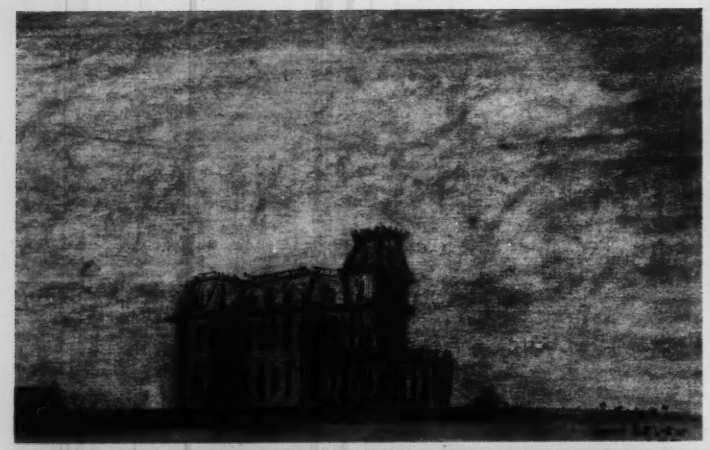
Now, in a Museum of Modern Art exhibition entitled "Designed for Film: The Hollywood Art Director," which opened last week and runs through September 26, the achievement of these artists of movie technology is being recognized. "The exhibition will not attempt to establish the art director as this week's auteur," write Mary Corliss and Carlos Clarens, who assembled the show and prepared its cataloguing in *Film Comment* magazine, "for the Hollywood film was the product of a corporate vision. The art director didn't make it all; he only made it all look glorious."

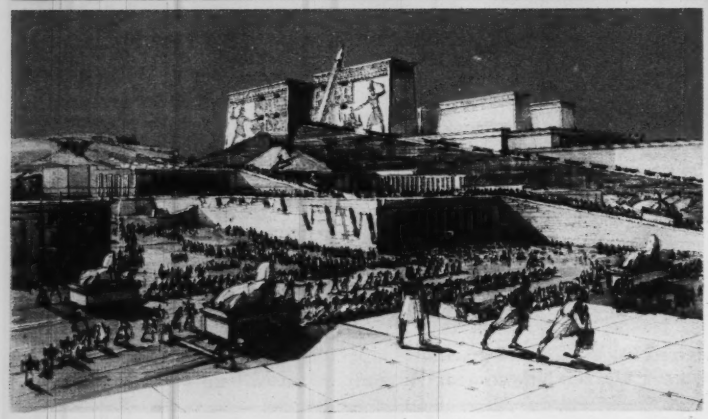
Anonymity has made these aristocrats of the industry refreshingly modest. But, when pressed, they'll tell of great moments in art direction: the day Boris Leven decided that a Victorian mansion would be the perfect "house on the prairie" for *Giant*; Robert Boyle's assemblage of 32 separate pieces of film (including several matte paintings executed by special-effects master Albert Whitlock; see page 55) for a single shot in Hitchcock's *The Birds*; the time Alexander Golitzen first led John Ford to a desert location called Monument Valley. In the MOMA exhibition and on these pages, we have the chance to savor the art director's accomplishments—some of the most marvelous designs to be found on either side of the rainbow.

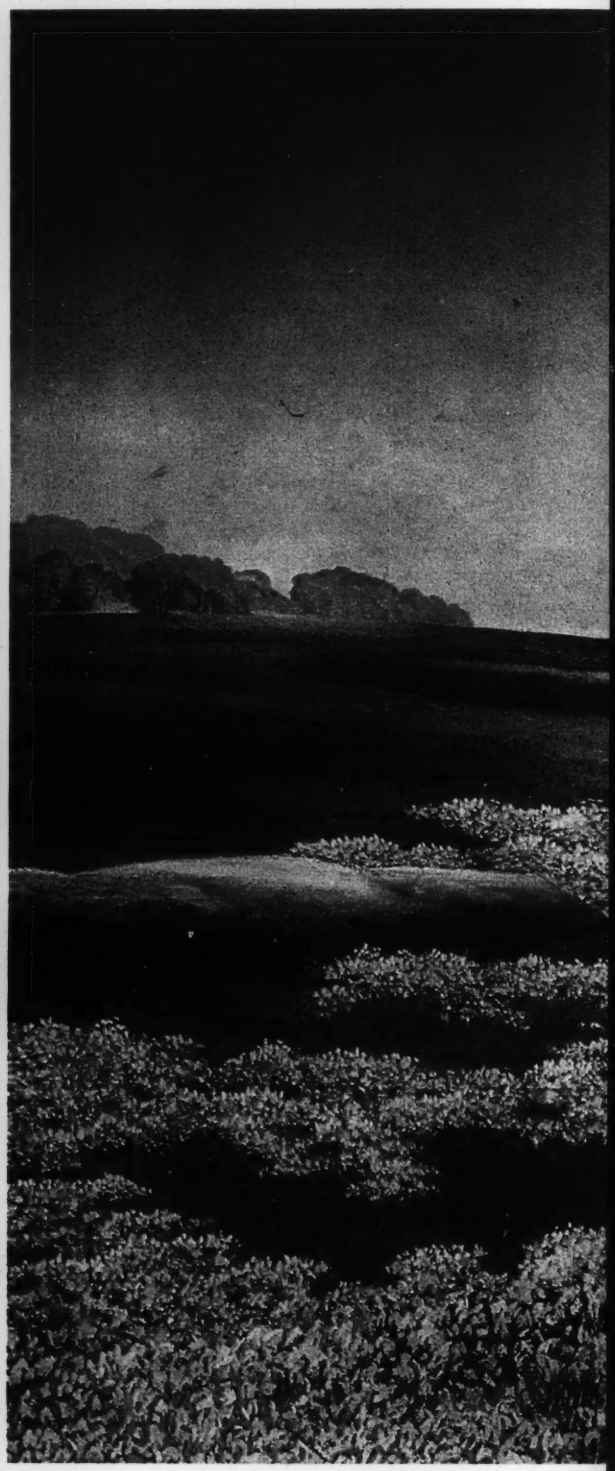
—Richard Corliss

Ziegfeld Follies (1946)—an MGM supermusical designed by an army of artists: supervisor Cedric Gibbons; unit art directors Jack Martin Smith and Merrill Pye; and matte artist Warren Newcombe, who painted this dream-real Broadway.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE KELLER/MOMA/FILM STILLS ARCHIVE







Designs for Film (left, top to bottom). *Giant* (1956): Boris Leven's sketch for the Benedict house is not only an arresting image; it summarizes the film's tensions between the Victorian ideals of the family and the wide-open amorality of new-rich oil men. *Young Frankenstein* (1974): Dale Hennesy's designs are models of imaginative film fantasy (*Fantastic Voyage*, *Sleeper*, *Logan's Run*, *King Kong*). *Swiss Family Robinson* (1940): The year before he

designed *Citizen Kane*, Perry Ferguson created this garden of earthly delights; and Alberto Vargas, better known for his overripe nudes in *Esquire* and *Playboy*, illustrated it. *The Ten Commandments* (1956): C.B. De Mille could not have become the Cheops of the cinema without art directors like Walter Tyler, Hal Pereira and Albert Nozaki. (Above). *The Wizard of Oz* (1939): Matte painting by Warren Newcombe.

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The Mechanic of Illusion

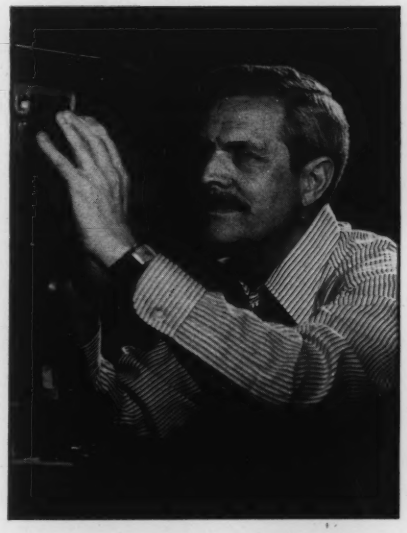
The art of Albert Whitlock is a curious hybrid: part optics, part graphics. It's art designed for the camera

by Joseph McBride

"A matte," Alfred Hitchcock explains, "is not a thing upon which you wipe your feet." Indeed not; Hitchcock, and many Hollywood filmmakers, have been relying for years on the matte paintings of Albert Whitlock to add scope and production value to their work. A modest, affable, energetic Englishman in his early 60s, Whitlock is responsible for creating some of the most memorable and spectacular images in recent films: the mile-high dust storm rolling over a sleepy Texas town in *Bound for Glory*; the fabulous mountaintop city of Sikandergul in *The Man Who Would Be King*; the swarm of gulls descending on a panic-stricken California town in *The Birds*; the baroque vistas of 1930s Chicago in *The Sting*; the crumbling, burning panoramas of contemporary Los Angeles in *Earthquake*. All of these shots were made by combining live action with matte paintings, images painted on glass or plastic.

In this era of escalating film production costs, producers and directors often consult Whitlock before they decide to go ahead on a project, because his expertise can shave literally millions of dollars from a film's budget and make the impossible possible to film. Period films, in particular, are becoming prohibitively expensive to make; and Whitlock is called upon to recreate locations that no longer exist or that are difficult to film. "We couldn't have made *MacArthur* without him," says producer Frank McCarthy. "Albert did 22 mattes, and they added double the production value of the movie."

McCarthy points to the recreation of the Japanese surrender aboard the *USS Missouri* as an example of Whitlock's wizardry. The filmmakers were able to use the actual ship, but it was tied up in Puget Sound off the coast of Washington; only Whitlock's matte work made it appear to be floating in Tokyo Bay. "How he did it, I'll never know," the producer says. Similar Whitlock magic made it possible to recreate Hollywood Boulevard of the 1930s for *Day of the Locust*; to rework a short black-and-white newsreel for the color feature film *The Hindenburg*; to turn a tiny HO-scale model train into the Chicago El for *The Sting*; to conjure up a nonexistent art museum for Paul Newman to walk through in *Torn Curtain*; to make a plastic scale model into a jetliner for *Airport '77*; and to turn a handful of caraway seeds into a locust swarm for *Exorcist II: The Heretic*.



Al Whitlock: Man behind the matte

Whitlock, whose screen credit for "special visual effects" passes unnoticed by most filmgoers and unremarked upon by most critics, works with a staff of eight out of inconspicuous quarters on the Universal Studios lot in North Hollywood. Aside from the sophisticated optical equipment, his cluttered laboratory has the utilitarian look of a carpentry shop. Whitlock makes no attempt at self-aggrandizement, and he is content to keep a low profile. "You make your reputation within the industry, don't you?" he observes, when asked if he regrets his lack of public acclaim. "When you work in the area of realism, the more successful you are, the more anonymous you become."

Within the film industry, however, Whitlock is regarded as a peerless craftsman, and Hitchcock, whose association with him goes back to 1934, acknowledges, "He is by far—and I mean this sincerely—by far the finest technician that we have in our business today. "If we could only have an audience say, 'My God, what a good matte that is!' But they don't, because they don't know that it's there. And that is the great achievement of Al Whitlock, to do something like this which can never be appreciated. That really brings a tear to my eye, because it's so sad. It's really a very, very miserable, degrading, horrible situation. So all I can wish Al is—more money."

One reason Hollywood has never touted its masters of special effects has been its desire to keep the mechanics of illusion hidden. This is changing, to some degree, as the filmgoing public becomes more sophisticated.

Whitlock's work has recently been honored with two Academy Awards (for *Earthquake* and *The Hidenburg*). He willingly discusses his techniques with anyone who asks ("I have no secrets," he says), and he will be lecturing on his work May 12 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City; but he re-

Joseph McBride is a screenwriter whose first produced screenplay, Blood and Guts, *will premiere at the Cannes Film Festival this week.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL TAYLOR

Matte Magic

Art or political commentary?: The White House in *MacArthur* is just an optical illusion—a shot of a Pasadena golf course with the details blacked out, sandwiched together with a matte painting

mains a firm adherent of the tradition of Hollywood classicism, which dictates that the goal of art is the concealment of art. And although he did some stunning work in creating imaginary landscapes for John Boorman's much-maligned *Heretic*, he disagreed with Boorman about the extent of stylization audiences will accept in filmic storytelling. "For some reason, audiences just won't accept films which aren't naturalistic," he says. "As an early scenic painter, I was involved in several schools of painting—some derived from the theater, which is highly decorative, and others of the new school, which was basically photographic. The theatrical school prevailed in the films of the 1920s, because German expressionism was the dominant influence; but in the 1930s the French influence prevailed, and the photographic school won out in film design."

A native of London, Whitlock left school in 1929 at the age of 14 because of the Depression. He had no formal art training; instead he found work in the British film industry, doing a variety of odd jobs—bit-part actor, errand boy and grip. "I was lower than the dust beneath their dolly wheels," he recalls. Eventually he gravitated toward scenery building and painting, and his first involvement with a Hitchcock film was assisting the miniature builder on the first version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. The following year (1935) he painted all the signs used in Hitchcock's classic *The 39 Steps*.

He painted backdrops, titles and mattes for many years, receiving his first screen credit for special visual effects in 1949. Five years later he emigrated to the U.S. and found work at Walt Disney Studios designing the titles for *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*. In addition to his film work at Disney from 1954 through 1961, he helped in the painting of Disneyland, but became disenchanted with the "cozy, complacent" nature of Disney working methods, and left the studio to freelance. Since *The Birds* in 1963, he has been under contract to Universal, which has loaned him to other studios for films such as *Ship of Fools, Catch 22, Diamonds Are Forever, Bound for Glory, The Heretic* and *High Anxiety*. And Whitlock's professionalism is such that he applies himself with equal enthusiasm to such tacky pieces of Universal program fodder as *The Car* and *Airport '77* as to a Hitchcock film (he has worked on the last six, from *The Birds* through *Family Plot*).

He is currently working on Universal's most lavish production, *The Wiz*, a black version of *The Wizard of Oz* (based on the Broadway play) with a rumored production cost in the vicinity of $25 million. Without Whitlock, director Sidney Lumet and production designer Tony Walton would be unable to turn New York City locations into the elabo-

rate blend of realism and fantasy demanded by the story. And among Whitlock's chores on *The Wiz*, for which he is supplying 29 shots, are the creation of tornado effects for the whirling snowstorm through which Dorothy will fly, and the transformation of the World Trade Center into the Emerald City, atop which the Wiz lives in all his gaudy splendor.

The snowstorm/tornado is composed of six basic elements, all combined optically: a shot of Dorothy (Diana Ross) "flying" against a neutral background; two cones revolving on tracks; two matte paintings; and "snow" which is actually powdered Styrofoam dropped into a spinning centrifuge and then reversed on film so it appears to be flying toward the audience. The World Trade Center towers in Whitlock's lab are only about seven feet high, but when these scale models (in effect, a 3-dimensional painting) are combined with film shot last winter of the real towers, no one will be able to tell the difference.

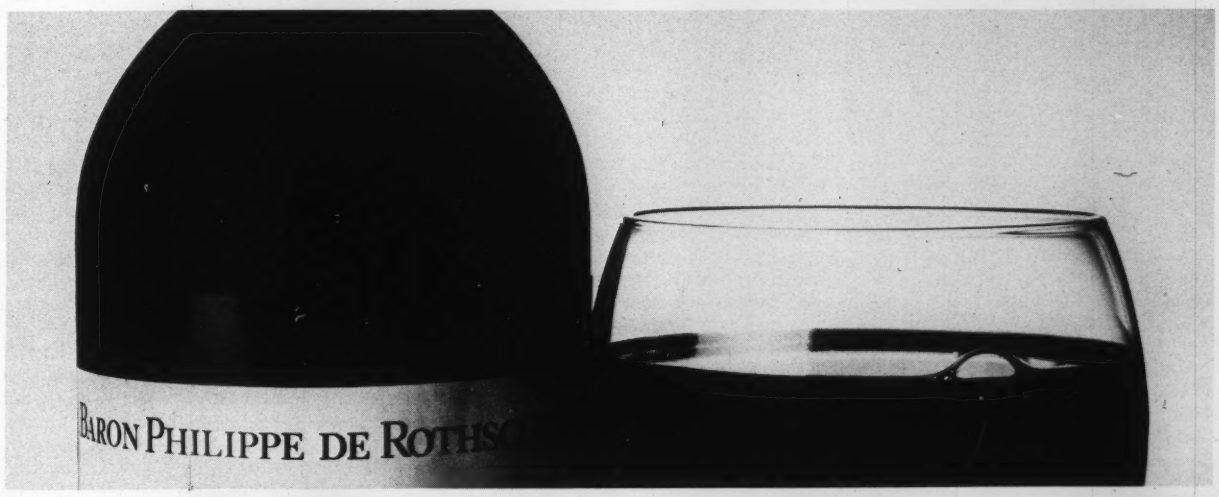
The art of Albert Whitlock is a curious hybrid: part mechanics, part optics, part graphics. It isn't the kind of art that hangs on museum walls, and it isn't meant to be. It's art designed for the camera. When you look at a Whitlock matte painting up close, the first surprise is how small it is, usually no larger than 5′ × 2½′, whether it's the White House from *MacArthur*, a Soviet freighter ship from *Topaz*, or Grauman's Chinese Theater from *Day of the Locust*. And it is surprising how vague some of the details are. On screen his matte shots appear crystal-clear and 3-dimensional, but that is an optical illusion.

"It's really impressionism," Whitlock says of his matte painting technique. "It doesn't have to be totally finished. Film has limitations, you see; it can't register everything the human eye can. So you build up to where it's acceptable and then you say, 'That's it.' Once, at Disney, I did a painting of a cliff and everybody told me how beautiful it was. But when I put it on film it was terrible. The flattery had such an adverse effect: You couldn't take your eyes off the painting. So I redid it in 25 minutes, and it was fine."

Whitlock tries to eliminate anything in his work "which disturbs the smoothness of the narrative," and he will go to extraordinary lengths to add scene-enhancing touches that no one consciously notices. Screening a scene from *The Wiz* in which Dorothy and her friends arrive in Emerald City via the Yellow Brick Road—which in this version is a bridge snaking through Manhattan—Whitlock expressed dissatisfaction over a faintly visible, hair-thin line dividing the live action from the matte painting. "It takes a whole day to get rid of that silly line," he said, "and it's a miserable silly job. A guy with training as an illustrator wouldn't be able to tolerate it, but I can tolerate all that screwing around." And while showing the *Bound for Glory* dust-storm sequence, he pointed out, "See, even the sky's moving. You don't notice it, but you would if it didn't."

The biggest dust storm the mechanical-effects men could whip up for the film was 50 feet high, and Whitlock had to make one a mile high. "It's scale, you see, that makes it effective, the little people in the foreground, the huge storm in the background." After an overhead view of a California town was filmed from a water tower, Whitlock constructed the dust cloud in his lab, using three small circular pieces of cardboard covered with brown-painted cotton. The discs were rotated at different speeds and moved laterally along a track in front of a matted sky, which was also moving. The cotton was slightly transparent, so the sky could be seen through the dust cloud. A separate matte was laid over the town to obliterate television antennas and other anachronistic objects from the Depression-era film.

The result was so convincing that it drew gasps from every audience that saw it, even from seasoned film industry personnel at a preview screening. A well-known director at that screening gave Whitlock the ultimate compliment when he asked the producer of *Bound for Glory*, "Was that a real dust storm or did Al Whitlock do it?" ●



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Organic Farming

Continued from page 29

seeds and nothing else. It's no surprise that "Today's Acre" won.

"If organic farming is so successful," one USDA researcher asks with a sardonic laugh, "then why are most of the country's 2.5 million farms still using chemicals?"

It's not as though most farmers have ever made a deliberate choice to farm chemically rather than organically, any more than a baby born in America makes a deliberate choice to speak English rather than Swahili. In the United States, chemical farming is the way of life. Try to take a course on organic farming techniques at your local university. After an exhaustive search, researchers on Senator James Abourezk's (D–S.D.) staff found only one in the entire nation, at the University of Massachusetts. It's no mystery why: During a recent year, Purdue University agricultural researchers and professors were funded by Shell, Monsanto, Chemagro, Dow, Union Carbide and a half-dozen other chemical giants, according to the Agribusiness Accountability Project.

And while USDA officials told me there isn't a single extension agent in the country trained to help farmers shift to organic methods, a farmer can find more than 4,000 people who sell and give advice about pesticides in Iowa.

"One of our biggest problems is that farmers who want to go organic have no organized resources to turn to," says grape grower Pavich. "You try going to the Tulare County farm adviser and say, 'Hey, how can I grow my grapes organically?' and they'll say, 'Are you nuts?'" Pavich sprawls on his living room floor, strewn with pamphlets, books, Xeroxed manuscripts, anything he can find even vaguely related to organic principles. "Trying to figure out an organic system of farming," Pavich says, "is something I've had to piece together pretty much on my own."

The lack of a network of advisers is crippling the spread of organic farms, pioneers like Akerlund and Pavich say, because shifting from the chemical to the organic way of life requires far more than tossing out the fertilizer and pesticide bags. Organic farmers who have already struggled through the transition say that kicking the chemical habit, just like kicking an addiction to barbiturates, can be a painful experience—economically fatal if the farmer isn't highly skilled and doesn't know precisely what he or she is doing.

"I won't tell a guy he won't get hurt during the first few years going organic," says organic orange grower Nick Stehly, "because he probably will. It's hard for a guy on chemicals to say, 'No more,' and then sit back and watch his trees take a beating until his fields get back to a healthy, biological control. It's just like your own body. If it's been sick and abused it takes time to restore it to balanced health."

It takes at least three years, according to University of California entomologist Carl Huffaker, to convert from pesticides to biological pest controls. And farmers trapped in an economic system that rewards short-term profits aren't likely to risk losing a single bushel of corn or a single bin of oranges just to go the organic route—even if it means assuring a far more stable and productive system over the years. "Sure, I've heard things about how our fertilizers are poisoning the ground and the dangers of pesticides and this sort of thing," says Spencer Wedberg, Del Akerlund's chemical-farming neighbor. "And maybe in my artificial system I am hurting the soil in the long run. But in the short-term economics," Wedberg says, "I need that extra production, every bit of production I can get. Land costs are going up every year, and I've got my tractor payments to meet."

Inside the nerve center of American agriculture, the government fortresses of Washington, there are stirrings of revolutionary change. In EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs, usually attacked

Healthy Advice

Are organically grown foods more nutritious and healthful than their chemically grown counterparts? Many organic advocates cherish the belief as gospel; most conventional researchers dismiss it as nonsense. "There is no proved, substantiated basis," a USDA science adviser declared, "for claiming that plants grown with only organic fertilizer have a greater nutrient content than those grown by conventional methods."

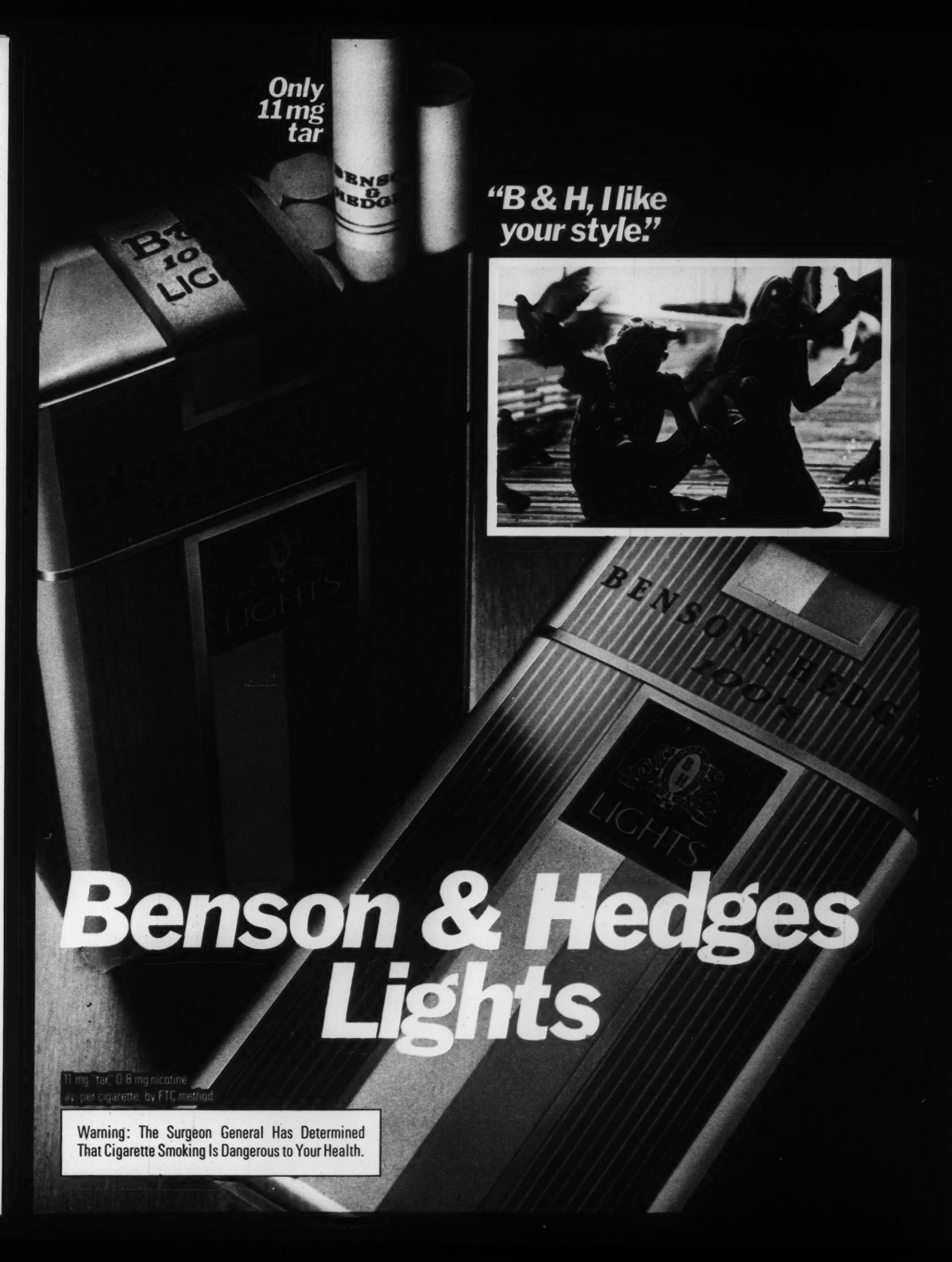
It has been a hard policy to challenge, since virtually the only serious study USDA researchers have conducted on the question dates back to 1951. The news, then, is that carefully controlled, scientific studies are comparing organically and conventionally grown foods in the 1970s—but you are not likely to read them in the United States. I had to travel to Europe. While the findings are far from conclusive, the preliminary evidence is potentially explosive: Biologically grown foods may well be more healthful than the chemical versions. And not just because they aren't contaminated.

Researcher Werner Schuphan, director of the West German government's Federal Institute for Quality Research on Plant Products, compared the nutritional value of eight common vegetable crops grown under conventional and biological methods for 12 years. His results: The biologically grown crops had significantly higher amounts of top quality protein, vitamin C and major nutrients such as potassium, calcium, phosphorus and iron. "That the consumer would benefit by a higher biological value of such products," Schuphan concludes, "is beyond question."

Schuphan's work appears reinforced by a current study at the internationally respected Agricultural College of Sweden in Uppsala. The college launched the nine-year study, Swedish researchers say, to combat "the apparent lack of information" swirling around the growing organic debate. Results from the first three years: Potatoes grown under biological methods had more vitamin C and better quality protein than the chemically raised potatoes. Chefs may be interested to learn that the biologically raised tubers had dramatically better cooking quality and more "potato flavor." Supermarket executives, take note: While the conventional potatoes had slightly higher yields in the fields, they suffered almost twice the rate of spoilage once they were put in the storage bins. Your grandparents aren't crazy when they say supermarket foods don't hold up anymore.

Some European researchers argue that merely measuring a handful of nutrients can't really tell you much about the quality of the food. Foods have a more elusive "biological value," as Germany's Schuphan calls it, a "wholesomeness" and "value for the maintenance of health" which standard nutrition tables can't reveal. One of the easiest and most effective ways to test this biological value, researchers believe, is to feed different kinds of foods to animals, and then see which animals are more fertile. Switzerland's Research Institute for Biological Husbandry has been comparing commercial dairy herds raised on biologically grown and conventionally grown feed—and the preliminary results, bolstered by animal studies in Germany, show that the animals on biologically grown feed are "significantly more fertile," according to Institute director Hardy Vogtmann.

Will USDA launch carefully controlled studies comparing the health value of conventional and organic foods to get some hard answers once and for all? Don't hold your breath. "Members of the scientific community, such as myself, are already basically convinced there is no difference," says David Moore, director of USDA's Plant, Soil and Nutrition Laboratory. "So we would find that not a terribly exciting research lead to follow."—*D.Z.*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Boxes of organic vegetables were hoisted onto trucks filled near the top with chemically grown produce, bound for supermarkets across the nation

for playing footsy with the chemical industry, administrator Bill Holmberg is rhapsodizing about organic farmers as "heroes of the future." (Holmberg, in fact, has just compiled the first public directory of alternative farmers and researchers.) On Capitol Hill, when five key members of the House Committee on Agriculture emerged from a meeting with Europe's leading proponent of organic agriculture, Congressman Frederick Richmond (D–N.Y.) said: "All of us at that dinner agreed that organic farming is something we should be pushing for, devoutly." And when dozens of scientists at USDA's Beltsville, Maryland, laboratories, the heart of the agriculture research establishment, gathered in an auditorium for a special lecture, it wasn't to hear about the latest wonders in fertilizers or pesticides, but to hear about the latest organic farming research. "There's a real and growing concern in the agency that we haven't been treating the nation's soils in a very kindly way," says scientist Parr. "I used to consider those organic people a bunch of heretics, but now I'm going to their meetings."

Like the Vietnam hawks who began turning on the war when they realized America's B-52 bombardments were failing, small but increasing numbers of agricultural researchers and policy makers are beginning to believe that the chemical blitz in the fields is doomed. "With the cost of energy soaring and the fact that we're running out of petroleum," as Congressman Richmond puts it, peering out his office window at his rooftop organic garden, "we've *got* to begin developing organic farming."

Government officials are also seeing organic techniques as a key strategy in the burgeoning crusade to save the family farm. "We think biological farming is a way to maintain and strengthen small family farms, because biological methods reduce costs, improve soil fertility, ensure long-term productivity and conserve energy," says Peggy Wheeler, a top aide to Congressman George Brown (D-Calif.). Brown has just introduced the Family Farm Development Act, a landmark bill that would pour government funds into researching and helping commercial farmers convert to organic systems. "Even one year ago most people would have looked at this bill and said, 'Organic farming?' and laughed," says Wheeler. "But with the new mood up here today we think the bill has a good chance of getting passed."

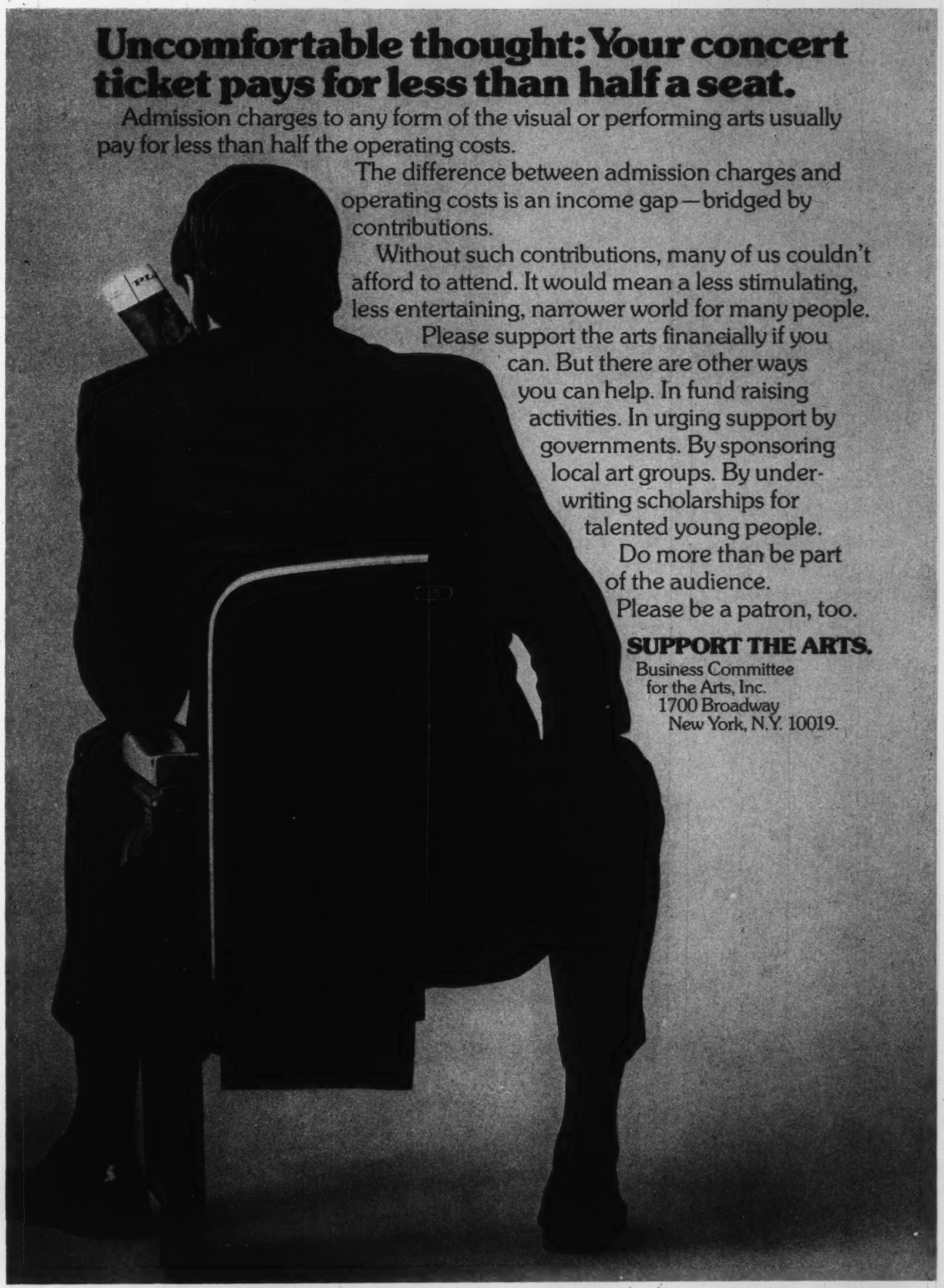
When it comes to hard research on biological farming methods, the USDA and land-grant colleges are just barely getting their toes wet. USDA and some of the colleges, for instance, are developing ways to transform city sewage and other organic wastes, now mostly dumped into giant landfills or into the ocean, into top-quality fertilizers. When USDA researchers grow corn and other crops using organic fertilizer made from the toilets of the nation's capital, "we get as good and often better yields than using artificial fertilizers," says soil scientist Eliot Epstein. But so far, USDA's total annual budget for the research equals the value of fertilizer that the chemical industry sells in an average afternoon.

In one of the most important developments, USDA joined the EPA and National Science Foundation to investigate ways farmers can slash insecticide use. Under a system called integrated pest management (IPM), farmers use a combination of biological controls, more resistant strains of crops, plus lots of vigilance—literally counting the bugs in the field—before hauling out the spray rig as a last resort. "Seven years ago my bell peppers were so infested with bugs I'd spray every eight or nine days," says California grower Jack Hubbard, who farms 900 acres of vegetables off the freeway just outside Los Angeles. Today, with IPM, "if I spray once a season on even part of my crop, that's something unusual," he continues. "And my yields have increased." But so far, USDA is spending only $4 million a year training farmers to use the IPM technique; the pesticide corporations will spend $200 million this year developing new poisons.

Proponents of organic agriculture have argued for decades that there is something about the way sophisticated, organic crops are grown which makes the plants—well, healthy, and resistant to insects and disease. Chemically treated crops, they claim, are sick: Only crops grown in an "impoverished and murdered soil," as Sir Albert Howard, a British organic researcher, wrote in the 1940s, "need to be bolstered up by poison sprays."

To most farmers and agriculture industry officials, the notion that organic methods can keep the bugs away is non-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL ZWERDLING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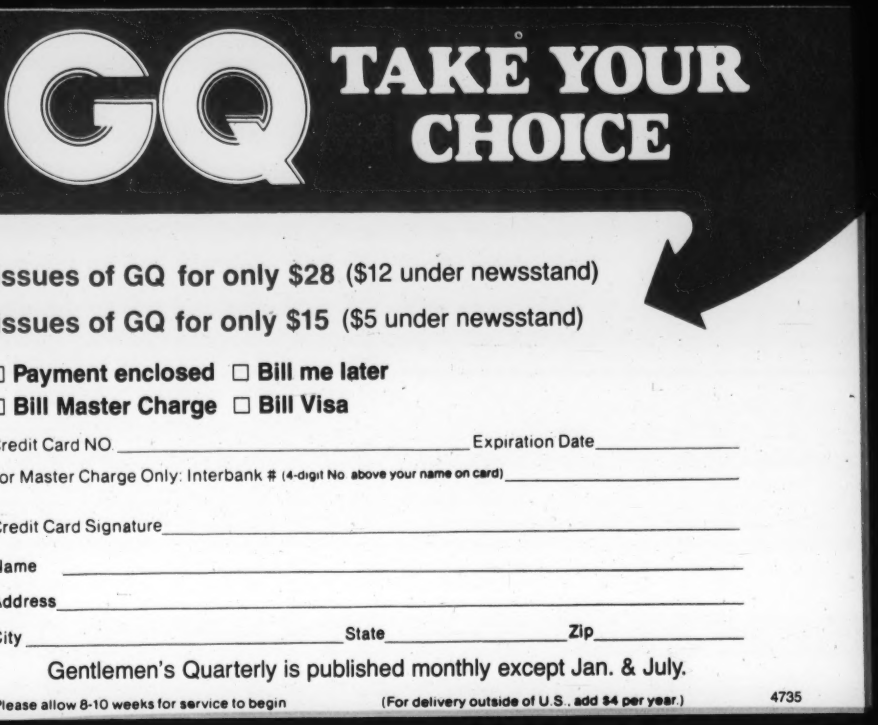
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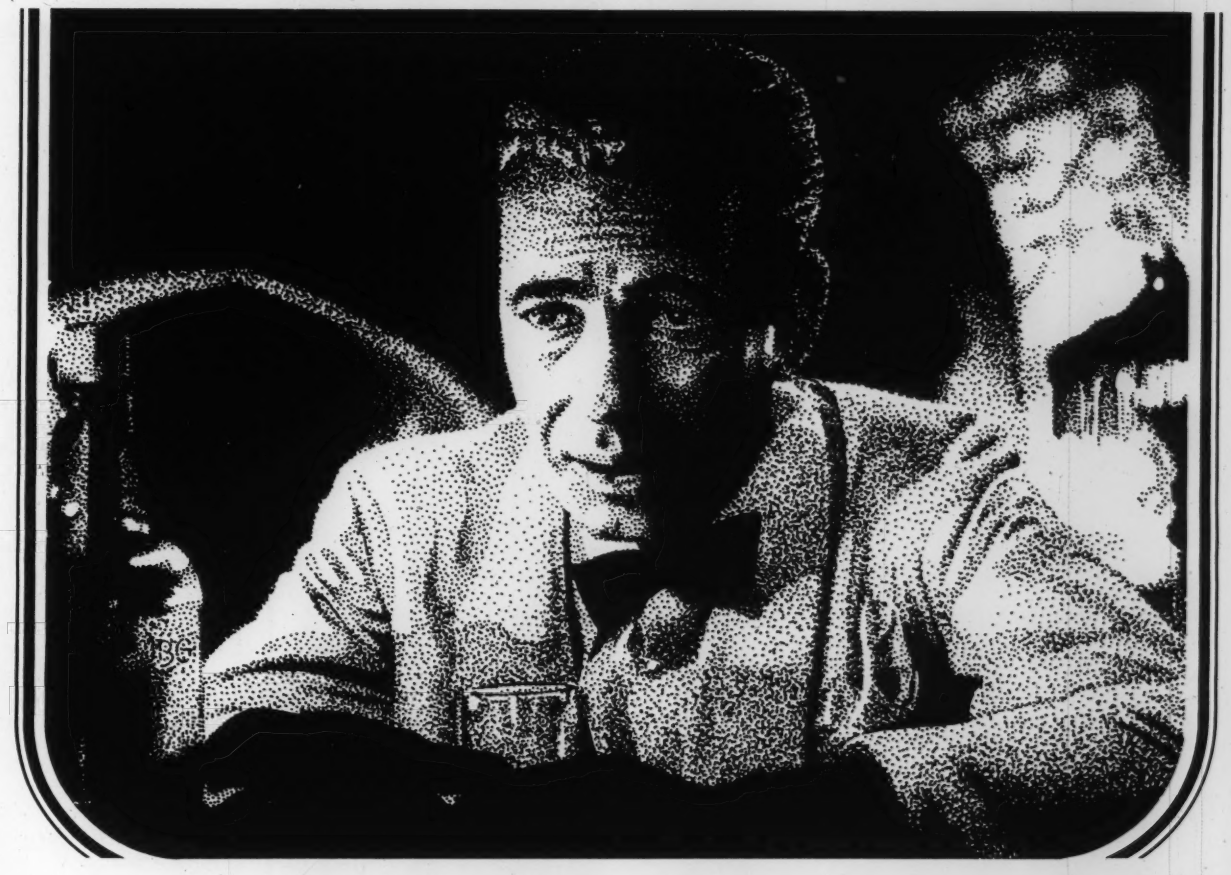

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While most Americans think the Dust Bowl is a chapter in history books, government investigators think the nation may be heading toward another one

sense. "I only know of sick research in people's minds," says William Hollis, science coordinator with the National Agricultural Chemicals Association, the pesticide industry lobby. "Akerlund *must* have insect infestations," chemical neighbor Spencer Wedberg says. "I mean, it's been so ingrained in the system, these chemical controls we use. I'd think Akerlund's crop would be an oasis for insects in a desert of chemical fields."

But mounting evidence from top researchers in Europe suggests that the organic farmers may be right. "Our studies show that common fertilizing practices are actually contributing to plant susceptibility to insects and diseases," says Francis Chaboussou, until recently director of entomology in the French National Institute for Agricultural Research. "The fertilizing causes physiological changes in the plants which, in effect, make the plants, shall I say, *juicier* for the pests."

And here's the most surprising finding of all: When farmers haul out the pesticides to combat the insects their artificial fertilizers are attracting, Chaboussou's studies show, the poisons may actually *increase* insect attacks. "The pesticides change the physiology of the plant to make it more nutritionally acceptable to pests," Chaboussou told me through a translator, "so they can reproduce to a larger extent than if you had not sprayed." Recent studies at Cornell University seem to corroborate Chaboussou's work.

While artificial fertilizers and pesticides may be making the nation's crops sicker and more vulnerable to pests, other studies indicate that common organic methods may help bring the crops back to health. "Many studies show that by incorporating organic fertilizer into pathogen infested soils, we can actually suppress the disease," says USDA soil scientist James Parr. "The organic matter nourishes the beneficial bacteria, which then reproduce at a tremendous rate and overwhelm the pathogens."

But these findings shouldn't come as such a surprise. "Doctors tell us that stress factors make people more susceptible to diseases, and plants are exactly the same way," says R. James Cook, a research plant pathologist at the USDA lab in Pullman, Washington. "I'm convinced that one of the biggest problems on the farm, the reason for the biggest increases in diseases in our crops, is that we're pushing our crops to yield more and more by any and all means available. By pushing for every last bushel with all these intensive methods, including chemicals, we're pushing the crops beyond their biological capacity. We've created an era of stress on our crops, stresses we'll be a thousand years trying to understand.

"I'm all for anybody who wants to use the organic approach," Cook says. "We know it works."

The biological methods that USDA and the land-grant colleges are developing—composting organic wastes here, cutting insecticide use there—are all important advances that will help farmers back away from their dependence on chemicals. But they are still a long way from organic farming: They are only isolated *reforms* that farmers can plug into their chemical fields, while organic farming is a radically different *system*. If USDA Assistant Secretary M. Rupert

Cutler gets his way, however, the government may well be promoting complete organic farm systems in the next few years. "I'd like to find ways," Cutler says, "to stimulate the state agricultural experiment stations to set up model organic farms."

What, then, are the prospects you'll be buying organic groceries at your local market in the next five or ten years? Even the most enthusiastic advocates of organic agriculture don't foresee all the nation's farms tossing out their chemicals. "I'm looking realistically for perhaps 15 to 25 percent of the nation's farms becoming organic in the next 15 years," says Robert Rodale, whose 1.2 million circulation *Organic Gardening and Farming* magazine is beginning to show up on the desks of top USDA researchers. "It's hardly likely that in this country we'll ever achieve a pure vision of the whole country farming without any chemicals," says Congressman Richmond. "But pure organic farming ought to be the goal."

Like Akerlund and Pavich and Stehly, thousands of farmers could probably go organic in time for the 1980 harvest, if only they knew how. But before major chunks of the nation's farms could be converted, says California State University economist Michael Perelman, "the nation will have to do some massive social planning, the kind of planning the government hasn't even begun to think about."

For instance, if Corn Belt farmers could get most of the manure churned out by cattle feedlots, statistics gathered by Cornell University researcher David Pimentel suggest, they'd have enough fertilizer to cover the entire Corn Belt. But to make it economical to use the billion tons of wastes, says Pimentel, "these livestock production facilities would have to be moved closer to cropland"— or the agribusiness industry would have to invent a way to move the manure to the farmlands in Alaskan-oil-style pipelines.

And if all the Corn Belt farmers suddenly start plowing under their vast monocultures and planting an organically sound variety of crops, USDA researchers warn, "total corn production would probably drop one-third to one-half" —that is, unless the government encourages other farmers growing nothing but wheat or soybeans to go organic, too, and start planting corn and other crops to take up the slack.

"From a practical point of view," says USDA research administrator James Iacono, "talking about organic agriculture has no bearing on reality." But the obstacles to organic agriculture are not so much inherent drawbacks in the organic system as they are products of stunted visions. American policy makers and researchers can't conceive there are other possibilities off the chemical track.

It's ironic: While some USDA officials continue to paint grim warnings about moving toward an organic system and losing a single bushel of corn—"there's a world of starving millions out there," Iacono worries—the Carter Administration hopes to pay farmers more than $3 billion during each of the next four years *not* to grow 20 percent of their normal corn and more than 50 percent of their normal wheat crops. It's nothing new. Since 1960, in fact, the government has routinely paid farmers tens of billions of dollars in subsidies not to grow food on an average of 50 million acres of cropland every year. Why, I asked USDA science and education administrator James Nielson, couldn't the government just as easily subsidize farmers to grow as much food as possible—a more organic way? "It would need some hard economic analysis," he mused—economic analysis that USDA researchers have never done. ●

Pretty Poison

Next time you slurp an orange or down a glass of juice, close your eyes and picture the citrus world of California. Driving through infinite miles of citrus groves, the orchards don't look so much like trees rooted in the earth as they resemble giant plastic models glued onto a brown pavement. The soil in the orchards looks hard and lifeless, blasted clean of any plant life by herbicides. One orchard is loosely paved with gravel. The trees shine with a lush green bloom, pumped by heavy doses of artificial fertilizers. The orchards are infested with pests—and poisons, lots of them. In just two decades, citrus fruits have become one of the nation's 10 most pesticide-drenched crops.

What makes the orange groves such a pesticide company haven? Thank Sunkist Growers, Inc., the marketing monopoly that controls 80 percent of all California and Arizona citrus. Some years ago, Sunkist launched a war against the little insect called a thrip—not because thrips hurt the fruit ("The interior quality of the fruit," as a Sunkist document notes, "is not affected") but because the bug causes "cosmetic" blemishes on the peel. In an age of whiter teeth and odorless armpits, Sunkist yearned for oranges with peels so perfect they would look like Mattel churned them out of a mold. The reason, a Sunkist document explains, is so the monopoly's "famous trademarks can be used to derive maximum benefits."

But Sunkist's pursuit of the perfect peel has created an ecological and financial nightmare in the groves. "It's a merry-go-round," sighs pest control consultant James Gorden, who works with commercial citrus growers. "First you spray for thrips. But when you spray for thrips you destroy the natural enemies of the red spider mite and scale, so you get mite and scale outbreaks. So you have to go in with mite and scale treatments, but the more you spray the more you wipe out their natural predators, and the more the mites bounce back and the more you *have* to spray . . . " Result: Spider mites, "once insignificant pests," says University of California entomologist Robert van den Bosch, "have become one of the most costly and serious pests in the industry."

Orange grower Nick Stehly has stumbled onto something big. "We haven't sprayed pesticides or artificial fertilizers in eight years," he says, as he loads fat, sweet oranges from his 160-acre citrus grove into great wooden bins. "Hell, yes, we used to spray like mad, I mean anything that moved. But it was like throwing money to the wind." So in 1969, Stehly recalls, he said "To hell with it all," gave away his spray rig, "and started building a healthy living soil." While the farmers whose fields dot the hills around him increased their herbicide and fertilizer treatments, Stehly hauled in tons of manures and asparagus hay and other organic materials, planted barley and oats between the trees—anything, he says, "to get the weeds to grow." *Weeds?* "I know the orchard looks like hell," Stehly laughs, looking at the wild and scraggly growth that flourishes between his orange and grapefruit trees, "but the damn weed is in the ground for a purpose, to open up the earth and let it breathe. Once a year I mow the weeds, and they rot and feed my trees. I always figured if you can't grow a damn weed in the ground," Stehly says, looking across the road at his neighbor's barren orchard pavement, "you can't grow a healthy tree." Stehly's weeds also serve another vital purpose: They create a haven, as university studies show, for the millions of natural predator bugs which Stehly imports to his groves to keep harmful pests under control.

Can an orange grower earn a living like this? "We're making a fine living," Stehly says, entering his sprawling adobe home and sitting down to meatloaf and potatoes with his wife—and 11 kids. Until two years ago, Stehly sold most of his citrus crop to Sunkist; since then he has switched to a marketer who doesn't toss out luscious fruits. Sunkist routinely rejects 40 percent of an average grower's shipment, merely because the fruits have brown spots on the peel. —*D.Z.*

Books/by Geoffrey Wolff

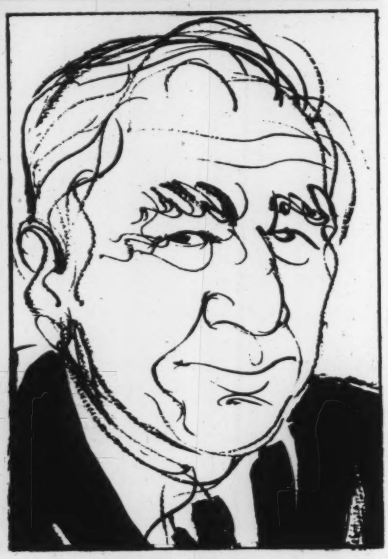
WITH WORDS FOR A WALKING STICK

New York Jew
by Alfred Kazin.
Knopf
(307 pp., $10.95).

This is Alfred Kazin's third personal book, and no two of them much resemble each other in texture or motive. The first, *A Walker in the City*, appeared in 1951, when Kazin—a cultural critic well-established indeed—was 36. It is one of the dozen or so glory books of American autobiography, a series of walks back through memory into Kazin's childhood as the son of immigrant Jews in Brooklyn's Brownsville ("*Brunzvil*") section. *A Walker in the City* is lush, a feast of senses and celebration of spirituality almost tremulous in intensity.

Sometimes the luxury of its emotional charge can cloy, as when Kazin writes of his discovery of the Jew Jesus, "my own Reb Yeshua, of whose terrible death I could never read without bursting into tears." (That "never" shares the rhetorical extravagance of Stephen Spender's "continually" in his poem "I Think Continually of Those Who Were Truly Great.") But Kazin is nothing if not calculating of tone, and now, in his bluntly titled *New York Jew*, he recollects how he came to the quiveringly fragile voice of *A Walker in the City*. His first try at the story had been "barren, smart, soulless. I was just not in it." When the book finally came, an innocent, almost passive, persona centered its scenes: "The boy I remembered in *A Walker in the City* was a necessary fiction, he was so virtuous."

Kazin has not published anything known to me that is "barren" or "soulless," and not the least of his critical virtues is his openness, a capacity for innocence—despite a great apparatus of learning—before the new. But when he fretted that he "was just not in" that early draft of his first personal book, he located his principal weakness in all three. He seems usually to balk at the final jump. It is not that like such reluctant autobiographers as Paul Bowles he discloses his private case against his will. Nor is it that decorum censors him. Rather he seems incapable of imagining himself as others see him. He visits Delmore Schwartz or Malcolm Cowley or Edmund Wilson or President Kennedy, and he looks them over with wonderful attention, he is every inch a critic; but it is as though they have not seen him.



Alfred Kazin

Reviewing Frederick Exley's serial confessions in *Pages From a Cold Island*, sequel to the extraordinary *A Fan's Notes*, Kazin remarked with distaste that to read Exley was "like being married to him." Kazin and Exley share an affection bordering on love for that late and prickly American institution Edmund Wilson, but no two writers could be less of the same tribe. Exley walks a wire, without a net, and sometimes he falls. He badgers, whines, abuses; his calculated style is the style of the drunk beside you on the barstool, telling you his life's story, and about ready to wheel on you.

Kazin picks his way with exquisite care through language to sense. In part he owes his precise calculation to his stammer, which obliged him as a child to prepare far in advance ("The word was my agony") what he meant to say. But this stammer also set him apart—"I was not like the others! I was not like the others!"—and it is his outsider's vantage that has made such a sharp critic of him, and has blessed him with the only virtue of loneliness, a wish to throw messages across walls.

Loneliness is the principal motif of Kazin's three autobiographies. The second, *Starting Out in the Thirties* (1965), is the sleekest of the three, the most assured and sardonic. But it returns often to the story of a spinster cousin Sophie, an exotic and hopeless case finally driven mad by her isolation: "She was a great sufferer; life had let her down." And Sophie herself is only the theatrical evolution of his mother's case. Kazin's mother never really learned English, not to speak or to read, not after nearly a lifetime here. Neither did his father. And for Kazin, a reverent man who writes in *Starting Out in the Thirties* of his belief that "salvation would come by the word, the long-awaited and fatefully exact word that only the true writer would speak," their isolation from their possibilities was monstrous.

But it is not inexpressible. The finest section of *New York Jew*, and it is the best thing Kazin has ever written, is a section titled "Words." It is about the death of his mother and his father, and about Kazin's visit on a cultural exchange to Russia, whence his mother came here in steerage. An Alfred Steiglitz photograph, taken in 1907 and titled "The Steerage," serves as frontispiece to the Harcourt, Brace and Company edition of *A Walker in the City*. It shows many immigrants, but its attention—and Kazin's—is fixed upon a woman wearing a shawl, with her back to the camera and only the slightest suggestion of her face, a rim of hair, perhaps her nose, in sight.

It has been Kazin's compulsion to imagine that shawled woman as his mother, and his purpose to turn her to full view. The exercise has been painful from the start: "With my mother every morsel of life was paid for in fear," he wrote in *Starting Out in the Thirties*. Her life was pinched, mean and anxious; she deprived herself, even in sleep, of dreams. Kazin, in *New York Jew*, lists her bleak mottos: "DO NOT TAKE A MOMENT'S REST. RUN, DO, WORK, AND KEEP YOUR OWN GOOD IN MIND."

Her son watches her die as her husband, after 47 years of "silent marriage," sat "stupefied in another room": "Her gasps rose out of her like fish struggling to reach the surface of a tank; they drummed so loud in my ears that I could not credit them to this skeletal face and annihilated body. Louder and louder she gasped; rhythmic pounding breaths; up, up, up, up. Suddenly it all stopped. She stopped."

And then Kazin's father dies, and as he lies dying Kazin "was shocked to see in the mirror the face I had seen on

ILLUSTRATION BY ELIZABETH VAN ITALLIE

him when I was twenty." This father was a house painter, alone in America as a boy, unable even to find his father's grave, a failure sounded several times in Kazin's previous autobiographies as an awful break in the chain. In *Starting Out in the Thirties* he tells how his parents married, without love or heat. On that Saturday night "my mother had gone out to bring some food back to their room and found my father sobbing." They were married only because loneliness was worse than marriage, and Kazin will not judge them on that account.

On the contrary, like many Jews of his time and place—passing tests in the New York public schools, and then at City College, and on and up, as the literary critic of *The New Republic*, further up, up, up, up—he has meant to redeem that marriage, and its get. And so he has. There is an uncharacteristically ironic, even sour, note in one confessional burst from *la plage des intellectuels* at Wellfleet on Cape Cod, where this New York Jew summered in the sixties with Edmund Wilson, Arthur Schlesinger, Robert Jay Lifton, Jason Epstein, Philip Roth, Irving Howe, Daniel Aaron: "At the moment we were all looking very well after ourselves. Round and round we rode, the great carrousel of American literature, American money-getting, American fame." This passage has greater bite and wit than anything in Norman Podhoretz's *Making It*, but it shares some of that sad book's cynicism.

Kazin has earned honors from intelligence and honor. No one has better put in scale the place of such New York intellectuals, such New York Jews as Alfred Kazin, than Irving Howe, in *World of Our Fathers*, about immigrant East European Jews and their children: "But really, when you come to think of it, what did this 'success' of the intellectuals amount to? A decent or a good job, a chance to earn extra money by working hard, and in the case of a few, like Trilling and Kazin, some fame beyond New York—rewards most European intellectuals would take for granted, so paltry would they seem. . . . The whole business: debts, overwork, varicose veins, alimony, drinking, quarrels, hemorrhoids, depletion, the recognition that one might not prove to be another T. S. Eliot, but also some good things, some lessons learned, some 'rags of time' salvaged and precious.

"Here and there one could find petty greed or huckstering, now and again a drop into opportunism; but to make much of this would be foolish. Common clay, the New York writers had their share of common ambition. What drove them, and sometimes drove them crazy, was not, however,

Kazin picks his way with exquisite care through language to sense

the quest for money, nor even a chance to 'mix' with White House residents; it was finally, when all the trivia of existence were brushed aside, a gnawing ambition to write something, even three pages, that might live."

I quote Howe at such length to enlist him to speak for Kazin, who never faces directly the particulars of his ambition, or his standing in the world. His standing is instead understood by inference, and by the company he keeps. Kazin is at his sharpest describing fellow writers and intellectuals; he indulges not the merest suggestion of malice, but can nevertheless pin the important, and especially the self-important, like specimens in a display case. The effect is aphoristic:

Mary McCarthy, closing in for an argumentative kill, "looked beautiful in the increasing crispness of her analysis."

T.S. Eliot was "an institution capable of great suffering."

Paul Goodman was so self-absorbed that he "did not listen even when you praised him."

As Saul "Bellow became famous, his sense of his great powers was affronted by the stupidity of others. It would be my function in life, like that of all critics, to disappoint him."

Bernard "Berenson the great artifact, a Gatsby who kept up appearances to the end, was in Santayana's eyes simply a pushing Jew."

For Lionel "Trilling I would always be 'too Jewish,' too full of my lower-class experience."

These summaries are exact and acidulous, but only a generous man could pull them off. They are a refinement of, organic with, the delicious curses and disputations recollected in *A Walker in the City*: "'You're killing me! You're plunging the knife straight into my heart! You're putting me into an early grave! May you sink ten fathoms into the earth!' Such bitter accusations were heard among us all the time, but did not mean even that someone disliked you. In Yiddish we broke all the windows to let a little air into the house."

Kazin is slow to anger on the page, but can be moved to something like hate. The provocation is always the same, another's contempt for the human consequences of an idea or an act. *Starting Out in the Thirties* is largely

Who says you can't speak another language in 60 days?

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given over to the wildly complicated factionalism among Kazin's friends from that period, almost all of whom thought of themselves as Marxists. After the Moscow Trials, and then the non-aggression pact between Stalin and Ribbentrop, a legendary sorting-out was forced upon American Communists. To Kazin's astonishment, Stalin retained his apologists, Kazin's former friends: "All my life I had lived among people who had seemed to me beautiful because they were the dust of the earth; I had taken literally the claim that they identified their suffering with the liberation of humanity. I now saw that the ideologues among these people had no moral imagination whatever . . . They were merely the slaves of an idea . . ."

Kazin has a long memory, and no tolerance at all for the impulse to abstract people. He relishes ideas for their juice, and not for their stainless, cold polish, their hard glitter. *New York Jew* hasn't the beauty of design of *A Walker in the City*, with its baroque loops and links, nor of *Starting Out in the Thirties*, with its Bauhaus simplicity. Sometimes the prose goes slack here, and sometimes Kazin repeats himself. He often seems less certain of himself than he once was—but this is said to be a product of wisdom in good men.

Whatever the faults of *New York Jew*, its end, the final scene of its wonderful final section, satisfies what Howe called any writer's ambition to write a few words "that might live." The last paragraph is set high above Lincoln Center, at a party where intellectuals buzz and nip at ideas, at notions about the "neurotic guilt" of concentration camp survivors. They chatter about movie reviews, about Lina Wertmüller's version of the Holocaust. And from a window Kazin looks across the Hudson at another holocaust, a blaze on the Weehawken piers: "Blaze was always my word for joy. Fire has haunted my life and I talk to my dead in my dreams—our dead—like those epic heroes who in the other world talked to *their* dead separated by a screen of fire." And then, like the Psalmist, Kazin calls out to his God, and to others: "Sweet loves! Absent friends! Mama, Papa! *Where* are you?" And then Kazin, the teacher, shushes the chatterers, and shows them the blaze across the river. They draw near him: "The sky is all red, crazy-red. People reach out, feel each other hungrily. The sky over our heads has been loosened at last. I want to love again. I want my God back. I will never give up until it is too late to expect you."

Imagine the nerve it took to write those lines. Imagine wanting love enough to run such a risk. And, finally, to redeem it! ●

Records/by Jim Miller

ELVIS COSTELLO IS MAD AS HELL

On the strength of **This Year's Model** (Columbia), Elvis Costello must be considered the most powerful new voice in rock—a performer with an awesome ability to define the dimly felt dissatisfactions that, in this decade of disenchantment, form our common lot. Yet he makes an ungainly pop prophet. On stage, the windmill flourishes of the guitarist evoke Peter Townshend, while the defiant posture of the singer suggests Bob Dylan. But the moves are out of sync. He stumbles where he should pirouette, he looks distracted when he ought to be cocky. The character he projects never quite connects. But that is only one more badge of his autonomy, one more sign of his appeal: Woody Allen Sings Nietzsche.

To say he expresses anger scarcely does his sensibility justice. A classic case of *ressentiment*, his hate is born of impotence. When the Rolling Stones demanded "Satisfaction," the remedy was obvious enough. Costello, by contrast, presents us with a misfit most adept at onanism ("I'll be at the keyhole outside your bedroom door"). His angry man simply cannot get off: "Have you been a good boy?/Never played with your toy?/No, you never enjoy/Such a pleasure to employ." Sex for him is a sadomasochistic game of dominate and be dominated. "Sometimes I think that love is/Just like a tumor/You've got to cut it out," he sings on "Lipstick Vogue." Or, as he confides in "The Beat," "I don't want to be a lover/I just want to be your victim."

But I am doing his music a disservice. What you first hear on *This Year's Model* is not the words but the sheer sound: a roar of rock propelled by echoed drums, an insistent Farfisa organ, and Costello's vocals. On the sonic level alone, this is clearly one of the most exhilarating albums released this decade. With the help of his touring band, the Attractions, and producer Nick Lowe, Costello has sharply focused his arrangements, dropping the rather pallid neoclassicism that characterized *My Aim is True*, his first album. The Attractions play basic ensemble rock, but it hits like a revelation: Elvis Costello uses clichés as if he had just invented them. Long after the echoes of the Beatles, Byrds, Who, Stones and Dylan have faded, there remains the certainty that this man has created rock anew, with an urgency that is evident in the sound itself.

This year's model: No satisfaction

The music produces a powerful undertow that pulls the listener into the heart of Costello's vision, where the words come alive amid waves of sound that all but overwhelm them. "Sometimes I almost feel like a human being," he asserts defiantly in "Lipstick Vogue," one of the most ferocious rock songs ever recorded. It is a claim redeemed elsewhere with staccato drum rolls, machine gun guitar and a barrage of insults hurled at everything from the girl in bed to the government at Westminster. An Underground

PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNN GOLDSMITH

Man for the seventies, running scared in Alphaville and painfully aware—like Roy Orbison—that "Love Hurts," Costello stakes his existence on sheer contrariness: By confounding the codes of civility that create a network of trust among human beings, he will compel those around him to recognize that he is alive and free.

Of course, this is a negative way of life. The first song on each side of *This Year's Model* opens with a refusal: "I don't want to kiss you/I don't want to touch you"; "No, don't ask me to apologize." But in a crowd where "everyone is overwhelmed by indifference," where "everybody's only goin' through the motions," and where the protagonist assumes that "vigilantes [are] comin' out to follow me," refusal becomes the solipsist's insurrection, and the most reliable route to self-assertion. To the proud but paranoid outsider in "The Beat," even the attachments of affection loom as a veiled plot: "If you only knew the things you do to me/I'd do anything to confuse the enemy/'Cause you're the one thing wrong with your befriending me/Take it easy—I think you're pinning me."

In these songs, life occurs as a nightmare where the personal contacts that might provide a haven merely become an intimate extension of the web society has spun to imprison us all ("They say you better listen to the voice of reason/But they don't give you any choice/'Cause they think it's treason"). Yet because personal relations are a metaphor in his songs for relations in society at large, Costello's lyrics transcend the simple spite expressed by previous rock misogynists like Jagger and Dylan. *This Year's Model* may begin with private refusals, but it ends with public references. The British album finishes with "Night Rally"—shades of Nuremburg—while the American version closes with "Radio, Radio": "I want to bite the hand that feeds me." Or, as "Lipstick Vogue" personalizes the same sentiment: "Let the controlling man insert the token/You want to phone me away/But I'm not broken."

This is explosive stuff. At a recent concert, I watched Costello mesmerize a sold-out audience of converts, each of whom seemed to have memorized every word on his first album. I came away convinced that the man speaks to the moment—for the frustrations he articulates are by now nearly universal. Like the heroic rock figures he already deserves to be numbered among, Elvis Costello creates a complex and dangerous character out of shared fantasies and fears. Going beyond the uncomplicated nihilism of the punks, he takes dead aim at the heart of our Great Depression. His aim is true. ●

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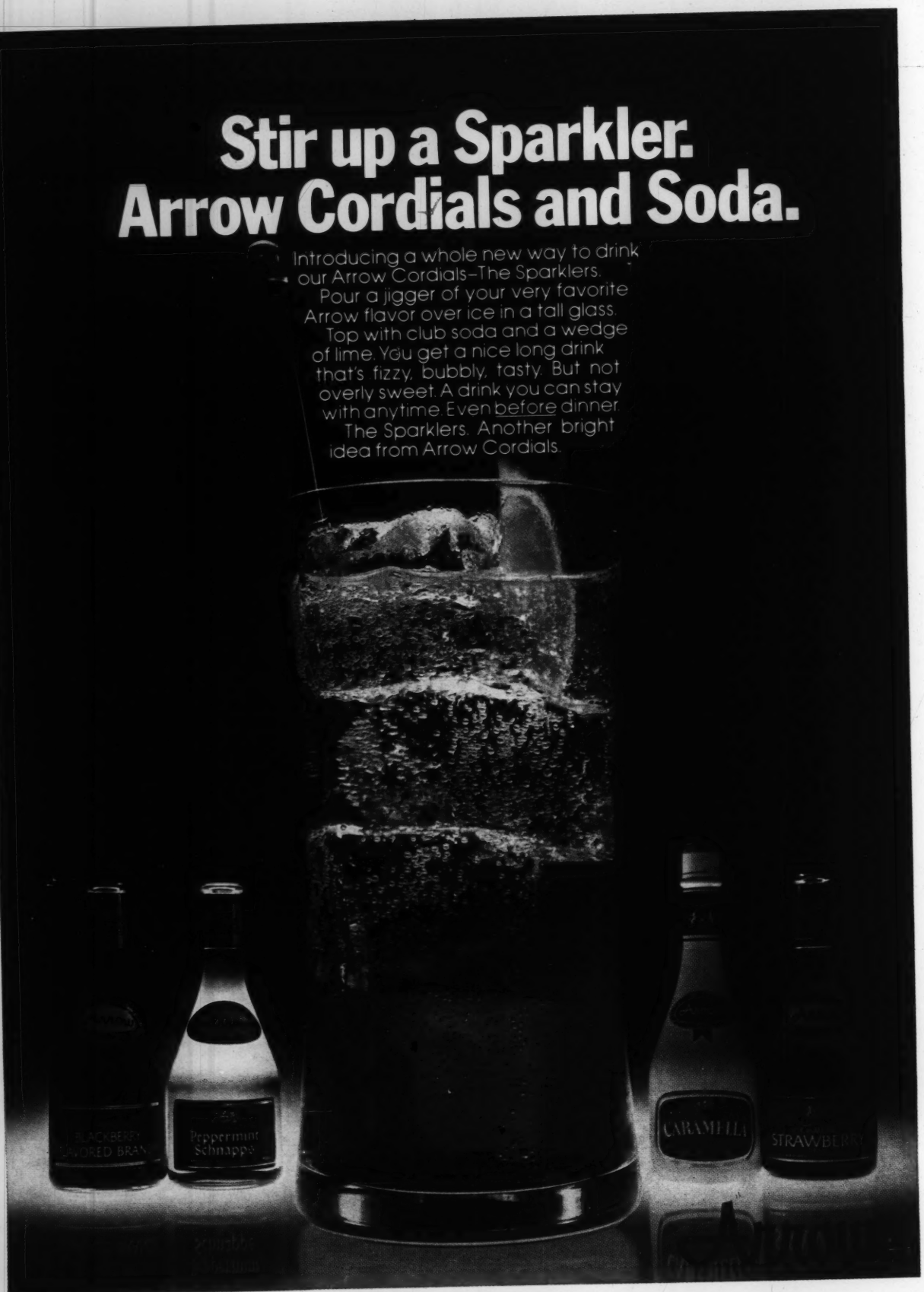

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Movies/by Richard Corliss

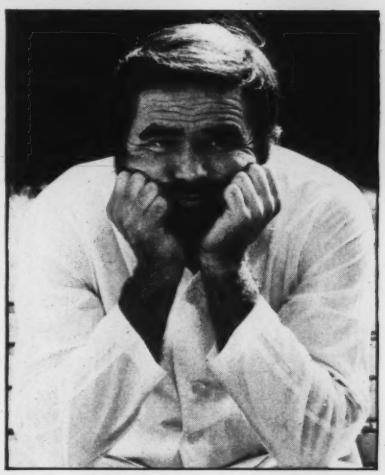
DEATH AND TUCHAS

Burt Reynolds wants to be Cary Grant. And, as he's shown in *Semi-Tough*, he *can* be—Working Class Div., anyway. So why, in **The End** (which he also directed, from a script by Jerry Belson), does he spend so much time trying to be Jerry Lewis? Our first view of this sexy, funny man is of his face squashed up against an aquarium glass, his nose and lips distorted like Lewis' in *Visit to a Small Planet*. And he spends too much of the movie screaming, flailing, falling down, throwing up.

Okay. *The End* is a farce about dying—"dead dying death," as Lewis used to say—and, of necessity, the tone will be jarring; there will be a split second between the execution of a gag and our laugh, while we're trying to decide if it isn't all too outrageous to be funny. But surely farce demands not excess, but precision. Farce proposes an absurd premise from which all else follows with devastating logic. There's no dramatic logic in having the Reynolds character cut off a dying man's life-support systems just to get him away from a pay phone. Forget the comedy of cruelty; it has no logic, so it just isn't funny.

A lot of *The End* is funny, though—or at least made me laugh—and for that I'll forgive the breaking of theatrical commandments that go back to Aristophanes. I laughed at Burt's confession to a very young priest who insists on being called Dave ("Bless me, Dave, for I have sinned"); at the psychiatrist who, on being asked if saying your parents are dead when they're not is a Freudian slip, replies, "Either that—or a booboo!"; at the domestic scene in which Burt's sloppy girlfriend stands over the kitchen sink, washing paper plates; and even at some of the antics of Dom DeLuise, as a lovable paranoid schizophrenic who's so devoted to Burt that he'll do anything to help him kill himself.

Jerry Belson's script was originally submitted to Woody Allen; and the most interesting question about *The End* is whether Reynolds' redneck fans will take to this demonic, off-putting comedy. There couldn't have been more than three people in the country who saw both *Smokey and the Bandit* and *Annie Hall* last year. Will Reynolds' new movie mark the beginning of a blending of the two audiences? Or the end of a profitable romance between ordinary moviegoers and this incandescent Hollywood star who—and not for the first time in his career—has landed on his *tuchas*?



Burt in *The End*: Suave or silly?

"*Frankenstein* and *My Fair Lady* are the same story," William Holden tells Audrey Hepburn in *Paris When it Sizzles*, a 1964 movie which is also about man's desire to create—or just make—the perfect creature. There are only so many stories, in high or popular art; and occasionally a critic finds himself writing about two films that have nothing in common but a specific plot. A few months ago, *The Serpent's Egg* and *Coma*—two more variations on the *Frankenstein* story. And now, *The End* and Moshe Mizrahi's **Madame Rosa**: the discovery that one is about to die; the will to choose one's own moment of death; an innocent accomplice who just wants to help.

Here, though, the setting is not upper-middle-class Los Angeles but below-lower-class Paris; the protagonist is not a hustling realtor in his 40s but a gout-ridden ex-prostitute in her 60s; the genre isn't farce, it's warm human drama. If you're like me, you may anticipate that a drama about a sick old Jewish woman and her devoted Algerian urchin may be just a bit too warm and human to digest without incident. We'd both be wrong. For a start, *Madame Rosa* is a film out of the modernist French tradition—director Robert Bresson is the patron saint—in which all the characters, even the children, realize that life is too much an existential tragedy to ever smile, or be animated, about. The film wears its heart *under* its sleeve. Everyone in *Madame Rosa* is glum, slow-moving, pensive—as if they'd just finished seeing their own movie.

For another, *Madame Rosa* isn't so much the meeting of Mother Courage and Bambi as it is the story of an obsession—the things we do for love. At their best, movies about obsession provoke in us the gasp of recognition that human beings are capable of . . . anything. Because of the decent gravity with which Mizrahi approaches his daunting subject, and because of the knowing and moving performances by Simone Signoret and Samy Ben Youb, *Madame Rosa* is almost one of the best. *The End* presents the pain of dying as the whack of a slapstick; *Madame Rosa* sees suicide as man's only possible triumph, not over death, but over life.

Dear Detective. For proof that there are still French movies that haven't forgotten how to smile, or make us smile, see Philippe de Broca's new comedy suspense romance. Almost alone in the sixties, de Broca kept the French boulevard tradition alive and well, with soufflé comedies like *Male Companion*, *Devil by the Tail* and *Give Her the Moon*. It's good to see he hasn't lost his form, and that adroit charmers like Annie Girardot and Philippe Noiret can still find characters they can slip into, like bright, comfortable old pajamas. Seeing *Dear Detective* is like going to the movies again.

"F.I.S.T." Sylvester Stallone & Co. wanted to dramatize the history of the Teamsters, and to evoke the pains of labor we remember so clearly from *On The Waterfront*. So young John Kovak rises from working man (Brando's Terry Malloy) to mob-connected boss (Lee J. Cobb's Johnny Friendly). But Stallone doesn't have the range or the power to lead us through the transition; and he's too insistent on turning Kovak into a sweet, dumb Rocky Balboa to allow any insights of moral ambiguity to cloud and enrich his character. And director Norman Jewison, like so many contemporary filmmakers, gets bogged down in period production values. Being poor and forming a union during the Depression never looked so beautiful. See "*F.I.S.T.*" and you'll say: "If I can't go to the South of France this summer, send me to Cleveland in the '30s!" ●

CBS Rubs Out Kojak/by Richard Turner

FINAL TRIBUTE

The *Mary Tyler Moores* and *Carol Burnetts* die with dignity, but the death of *Kojak*, which ran its last new show several weeks ago, was an ignominious affair. Instead of tearful eulogies and then an emotion-choked final taping, it went like this: a slight dip in the all-important "numbers." Then a new, crummy time slot from CBS, followed by less promotional energy from the network. More low ratings. And finally, after five seasons, cancellation.

Kojak's reversal of fortune was positively Nixonian: Shortly after its premiere in 1973, it became one of the top ten shows on television. Over the next two years it ranked consistently in the top twenty. Internationally, *Kojak* is among the most popular programs in history. But in recent weeks CBS has been pre-empting *Kojak* reruns for such items as the Miss USA Pageant.

Kojak's reputation didn't always put it in the select cluster of "respectable" programs. It made the PTA's ten-worst list. (Ever tried to watch shows on their ten-*best* list?) Pundits who had obviously never watched it would cite *Kojak* as an example of the stupidity of TV cop shows, presumably because the name was catchy and jazzed up their prose. When Florida teenager Ronald Zamora murdered his 80-year-old next-door neighbor, his lawyer flamboyantly subpoenaed Telly Savalas, claiming that six to eight hours of tube a day (about the national average) had made his client "legally insane" and that *Kojak* in particular had driven the youth into a frenzy. (Nothing came of this strategy, and the kid got life.) Savage crimes were always being attributed to episodes of *Kojak*. And there were other assaults on the show: One scholarly article accused *Kojak* of being "self-consciously modern in its subject matter" for dealing with such topics as rape, race and alcoholism (arguably the major themes of the Bible).

But a eulogist should be kinder; and if *Kojak* wasn't television's finest hour, it was as good a dramatic series as we've had this decade. *Kojak* had that TV rarity—a sense of place. If Mary Tyler Moore really lived in Minneapolis, she would have been Mary Tyler Olson, but the tough, urbane, Old-World Kojak was unmistakably New York. He was definitely not "white

bread," as one of the show's producers puts it. He may have been incorruptible, but he was never the cloying, crusading goody-goody. Good guys in New York can't get away with the Sir Galahad act—they need grit, and if they don't have it (witness John Lindsay), they tend to get run out of town. No, *Kojak* was set in New York, about New York, its tone governed by New York. (About the only thing it wasn't was *filmed* in New York, except for its fourth season. "It was a miracle they allowed us to do it," says one *Kojak* creator, referring to the widespread bias against producing a TV series too far from L.A. But when that fourth year brought on the ratings slippage (from 20th to 66th), the word around Universal Television was that shooting in New York had led to too many ghetto locations, too much grim material.)

Still, New York lent *Kojak* a restless energy. It is night, the streets of New York are rain-slicked, the skyline lights fuzzy through the mist. Hokey, but at least it didn't look like it was filmed in a ranch-style kitchen unit. There's panting in some dank alley, a glint of eyes watching some innocent ethnic couple. A murder. Cut to Lt. Theopodophilous Kojak and some stock footage of his unmarked squad car screeching to the scene. Round up suspects, he barks, hit the streets. Then it's back to the smoke-filled station house. Kojak bawls "Crocka-a-ah!" and junior detective Crocker comes through the door, as he does a dozen times each show. Put so-and-so under surveillance, Kojak says. Captain McNeil appears, world-weary and cynical. You've got to lay off, Theo. Heat from the mayor's office. The feds are butting in again. And it's rolling, the inexorable momentum of Kojak on the case.

Telly Savalas, with his somewhat prehistoric features, dominated the close-up world of the TV screen, freaky and exaggerated. But the main character was New York, and Kojak and his men would prevail only when they proved they understood the place, that they had for a fleeting instant mastered it. This gave *Kojak* its appeal for many normally not prone to cheer on officers of the law. Kojak wasn't defending a corrupt system so much as just trying to keep a dangerous city going, even if he was only beating the waves with chains.

Kojak was no thug like Baretta, no collection of artificial eccentricities like Columbo, no cherub-faced clone who pulls cats out of trees on La Cienega Boulevard, as on *Adam-12*. He was a *personal* cop, independent. Television columnist John Leonard once complained that the Nixon years had replaced the private eye with the official cop, that we'd lost our "traditional American respect for the free-lancer." But when Kojak caught the crook, the real victory, as with Philip Marlowe, was a triumph of style. Our consolation was to see Kojak cut the criminal down with an ironic putdown, a pitying sneer—the line he'd deliver striding into the hideout when the jig was up. The high points came when Kojak would encounter some scummy lawyer the law couldn't touch and tell him, "You're ga-a-abage." No need for the poetry of profanity (without which a cop isn't a cop); Kojak could call someone a "cockroach" and turn it into a gem of Ciceronian abuse.

If living in a dying metropolis is coping, Kojak was the ultimate coper. He was invulnerable, not because he had the power of the State behind him, not because he toted a .35 magnum (he didn't), but because, better than anyone, better than all the cockroaches, Kojak knew his way around. ●

ILLUSTRATION BY PHILIP BURKE

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